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# The James Sprunt Historical Publications

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

The North Carolina Historical Society

J. G. DE ROULHAC HAMILTON } *Editors*  
HENRY MCGILBERT WAGSTAFF }

VOL. 14

No. 1



CONTENTS

THE HARRIS LETTERS

## JAMES SPRUNT HISTORICAL MONOGRAPHS

- No. 1. PERSONNEL OF THE CONVENTION OF 1861.  
By John Gilchrist McCormick.  
LEGISLATION OF THE CONVENTION OF 1861.  
By Kemp P. Battle.
- No. 2. THE CONGRESSIONAL CAREER OF NATHANIEL MACON.  
By Edwin Mood Wilson.
- No. 3. LETTERS OF NATHANIEL MACON, JOHN STEELE, AND WILLIAM BARRY GROVE, WITH NOTES.  
By Kemp P. Battle.
- No. 4. LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE LOWER CAPE FEAR, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.  
By Kemp P. Battle.
- No. 5. MINUTES OF THE KEHUKEY ASSOCIATION, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.  
By Kemp P. Battle.
- No. 6. DIARY OF A GEOLOGICAL TOUR BY ELISHA MITCHELL IN 1827 AND 1828. INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.  
By Kemp P. Battle.
- No. 7. WILLIAM RICHARDSON DAVIE, A MEMOIR.  
By J. G. de Rouilhac Hamilton.  
LETTERS OF WILLIAM RICHARDSON DAVIE, WITH NOTES.  
By Kemp P. Battle.
- No. 8. THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES OF SAFETY IN NORTH CAROLINA.  
By Bessie Lewis Whitaker.

## THE JAMES SPRUNT HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS

- VOL. 9, No. 1. THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THE PROVINCE OF NORTH CAROLINA.  
By D. D. Oliver.  
CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHN RUST EATON.
- VOL. 9, No. 2. FEDERALISM IN NORTH CAROLINA.  
By Henry M. Wagstaff.  
LETTERS OF WILLIAM BARRY GROVE.
- VOL. 10, No. 1. BENJAMIN SHERWOOD HEDRICK.  
By J. G. de Rouilhac Hamilton.
- VOL. 10, No. 2. BARTLETT YANCEY.  
By George A. Anderson.  
THE POLITICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CAREER OF BARTLETT YANCEY.  
By J. G. de Rouilhac Hamilton.  
LETTERS TO BARTLETT YANCEY.
- VOL. 11, No. 1. COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN COLONIAL NORTH CAROLINA.  
By W. C. Guess.
- VOL. 11, No. 2. THE NORTH CAROLINA CONSTITUTION OF 1776 AND ITS MAKERS.  
By Frank Nash.  
THE GERMAN SETTLERS OF LINCOLN COUNTY AND WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA.  
By Joseph R. Nixon.
- VOL. 12, No. 1. THE GOVERNOR, COUNCIL, AND ASSEMBLY IN ROYAL NORTH CAROLINA.  
By C. S. Cooke.  
LAND TENURE IN PROPRIETARY NORTH CAROLINA.  
By L. N. Morgan.
- VOL. 12, No. 2. THE NORTH CAROLINA INDIANS.  
By James Hall Rand.
- VOL. 13, No. 1. THE GRANVILLE DISTRICT.  
By E. Merton Coulter.  
THE NORTH CAROLINA COLONIAL BAR.  
By E. A. Alderman.
- VOL. 13, No. 2. THE HARRINGTON LETTERS.  
Edited by H. M. Wagstaff.



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

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THE HARRIS LETTERS

1916

**THE SEEMAN PRINTERY**  
**DURHAM, N. C.**


THE HARRIS LETTERS

BY

H. M. WAGSTAFF

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## *THE PREFATORY NOTE*

The Harris letters which appear in this issue of the JAMES SPRUNT HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS represent, for the most part, a collection of the letters of Charles Wilson Harris (b. 1771, d. 1804) to his uncle, Dr. Charles Harris, and to his brother, Robert Wilson Harris. They were donated by William Shakespeare Harris, a son of Dr. Charles Harris, to the North Carolina Historical Society at an unknown date, but probably before the Civil War. The other Charles Wilson Harris letters, those written during his connection with the University of North Carolina (1795-1796), were found in a bound volume of manuscripts in the early faculty records of the University. They are about ten in number, and along with them have been inserted two Caldwell letters to Harris. There are two other Harris letters in addition, one by Robert Harris, father, and one by Robert Wilson Harris, brother of Charles Wilson Harris. The sources whence these were obtained are subjects of a foot-note to the respective letters. The chronological order has been preserved in the presentation of the whole series, this method appearing better to reflect their interest than the other alternative of grouping those to the same correspondent.

The name "Harris" is perhaps one of the most frequent in North Carolina. This must have been true at a very early period also, since the name covers full four and one-half pages in the index of the Colonial and State Records. The particular Harris family from which Charles Wilson Harris sprung was a very prolific one and has a large number of surviving representatives in the state at the present time. It traces its descent back to one Edward Harris of Wiltshire, England, who removed to Ayreshire, Scotland, in the latter part of the 17th century and there brought up a large family. One of his sons, Edward by name, married Flora Douglas of the celebrated Scotch border family of that name. Five sons of this union, James, Samuel, Thomas, Richard, and Charles, appear to have emigrated to America sometime in the second

quarter of the eighteenth century. Some of them settled in Pennsylvania and the others in Virginia. Later, probably about 1751, Charles came from Virginia to North Carolina and purchased a large tract of land on Rocky River in the Poplar Tent district of the present Cabarrus County, but at that time in Anson. This district was at the time receiving a strong tide of Scotch-Irish immigrants and soon became a populous Presbyterian stronghold. This Charles Harris was twice married; first to Jane McIlhenney and, second, to Elizabeth Baker. From the first marriage was born in order Robert, Martha, Jane, Thomas, and James; and from the second, Charles and Samuel Harris. Robert Harris, the eldest of these offspring of Charles Harris, inherited "Mill Grove," the home seat of his father on Rocky River, and became a man of fortune and influence in his county. He married Mary Wilson, daughter of Zaccheus Wilson, a signer of the "Mecklenburg Declaration," and of the same strong Scotch Presbyterian stock as himself. As a Revolutionary patriot and soldier Robert Harris, "Esquire," served in General Joseph Graham's command until he lost his arm in the skirmish at Clapp's Mill, a preliminary incident of the battle of Guilford Court Courthouse in 1781. With slight hopes of his recovery, his companions gave him into the care of an old German settler and wife, with the injunction to "care for him well, as he was a man of consequence, and they would be rewarded." (See Graham's General Joseph Graham and His Revolutionary Papers, pp. 335-337.) Harris' descendants state that Mrs. Harris dreamed her husband was wounded and on the faith of the dream traveled with a slave, Jack, as her only attendant from her home on Rocky River to the scene of the battle, seventy-five miles away, found her wounded spouse with his caretaker, nursed him to convalescence and brought him safely home. To him, by this stout-hearted wife, were born three children, each proudly bearing "Wilson" in their Christian names. They were Jane Wilson Harris, Charles Wilson Harris, and Robert Wilson Harris. Jane, the eldest, married Nathaniel Alexander, son of John McKnit Alexander, secretary of the "Mecklenburg Conven-

tion." They had nine children and numerous descendants survive. Charles Wilson Harris was born in 1771, and Robert Wilson Harris in 1779. Their mother died a few years after the Revolution, their father subsequently marrying the widow of General William Lee Davidson, who fell in the Revolution. Robert Harris lived to a ripe old age, dying in 1808 and lies buried at Poplar Tent Church, where he was for many years ruling elder.

Charles Wilson Harris graduated at Princeton in 1792 and was awarded the Mathematical oration. He then spent one, or two, years with his half-uncle, Dr. Charles Harris, at "Favoni," the home of the latter upon an estate adjoining that of Robert Harris and part of the original property of the eldest Charles Harris. Here he applied himself to the study of medicine under his uncle's guidance, apparently with the intention of entering that profession. Nevertheless, in 1795, at the date of his election to the tutorship of Mathematics in the University of North Carolina, he was teaching in Prince Edward County, Virginia. His letters thereafter, with the notes subjoined, sufficiently outline his life and services. They disclose a character of worth and dignity. At twenty-five years of age he was presiding over the fortunes of the state's infant University and in this role he manifests a maturity unusual even in that period of our state and national life in which abilities ripened early. The trustees relinquished his services with great reluctance. His seven years of life after entering upon the practice of law at Halifax were filled with earnest and successful endeavor and undoubtedly would have been crowned with high achievement but for his early death.

The editor wishes to express his appreciation and thanks to Mrs. Maud Craig Matthews, of Atlanta, Georgia, and to Mrs. Atwell C. McIntosh, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, great-grand daughters of Robert Wilson Harris, for their kindness in placing at his disposal certain of their family records that bear upon the genealogy of the Harris family.

H. M. WAGSTAFF.

Chapel Hill, N. C., Jan. 15, 1916.



## THE HARRIS LETTERS

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UNCLE,

I was not a little diverted with the Rev'd. Robinson, my partner in teaching, when a few days since, he propos'd in a serious way that I should study divinity and settle on some glebe in Virginia. The inducements I need not mention. He placed them in as flattering a view as possible. When he could not bend me to his will; for the promise of a Bishopric in this county could not induce me to trouble myself with these non-sensical Church preferments; he turned off his proposal by saying that I ought to study divinity in some measure, it contains the best system of morality, and morality is necessary to a man, let his calling in life be what it may. So it is with the world. Every one will tell you his knowledge is necessary, no matter what business you follow. The lawyer as well as divine repeats a long tale to the intended physician, each in favor of his own profession, the former of the advantage the study of law may be to him. The great Blackstone says a knowledge of law is necessary to a physician, that he may be useful to families upon sudden emergencies, in drawing up the formal part of last wills and testaments. Great encouragement indeed for one who has scarcely time to perfect the study of medicine, to set into the perusal of endless commentaries, reports, statutes, etc. But without so much preparation I have almost determin'd to go at once to physic. When I first undertook my present business I expected it and my professional study<sup>1</sup> would agree, but it is otherwise. Next winter is the time appointed in my own mind for beginning on this new study. I shall acknowledge with a great deal of gratitude any directions you may transmit me. What are made the rudiments of this art and what branches are generally enter'd upon first? I may at a leisure hour look over some of them.

The murder of the king of France cannot be easily forgotten.<sup>2</sup> His fate is lamented by almost all ranks of people.

Aristocrats pity him sincerely and the Democrats think he deserved a better end. The zealous protestant and avaricious merchant alone find their account in his death. The former confesses the king's death was unrighteous, yet adds that in the hand of God, it may be the means of advancing the cause of religion, and crushing the power of the pope. The latter wishes the perpetrators of the murder may be repaid in their own coin, that their remittances may be signed with their own blood, adding that the king was a good-hearted fellow, loved good eating and drinking. The very demand of his table was an encouragement to merchandise. Yet the commotions occasioned by his death will enhance the value of American produce in Europe, and American bottoms alone will have an unmolested navigation in the adjacent seas. By a calculation from the time of declaring war between England and France,<sup>3</sup> few European vessels will be expected in our ports after the 10th of next month. The forces of France as voted by the National Convention, will consist during this summer of 500,000 men.

I wrote to Edwin Reese<sup>4</sup> immediately after my return but have received no answer. I cannot suppose my letter has miscarried because I have received answers to some that were sent with it.

Your humble servant,

CHARLES W. HARRIS,

*Mecklenburg.*

Dr. Chas. Harris, April 28, 1793.

My love to Aunt Sally and Peggy.

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<sup>1</sup> At this date Harris intended to enter upon the study of medicine, doubtless inspired by the influence of his uncle, Dr. Charles Harris.

<sup>2</sup> Louis XVI was sent to the guillotine the 21st of January, 1793. The news had reached America in late February.

<sup>3</sup> France declared war against England the 1st of February, 1793, ten days after Louis XVI's execution.

<sup>4</sup> Son of Jane Harris and Rev. Thos. Reese and therefore first cousin of Charles Wilson Harris. Edwin Reese graduated at Princeton in the class of 1794 and was a student at the date of this letter.

DEAR UNCLE:

I have just come from P. Edward which place I left in tip-top spirits, expecting on my return to find at least three or four letters in Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> However I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Bruce<sup>2</sup> from Guilford from whom I heard much of the public and a little of the private affairs of your county. He told me that Maj. Harris<sup>3</sup> (I suppose Thomas) made a very respectable opposition to the election of Mr. Locke.<sup>4</sup> I am not acquainted with the foundation of this gentleman's popularity which seems to be so extensive. I wish he may answer his constituents' expectations, but pray that he may never be so successful in adopting sanguinary measures for the regulation of our great union as he has been in the regulation of his private affairs, otherwise we shall all be d—— wages, deserters of the general cause as soon as we are able to think for ourselves. By the same gentleman, I was certified that Sam'l. Caldwell<sup>5</sup> has had the good fortune to pick from the top of Mt. Fairview that full-blown most beautiful, and only remaining flower, Miss A——. I fear that while he has free access to so fair an angel, he will often evade those wars which a minister from his profession has striven to wage against the world, the flesh & the D-v-l himself. He is a gentleman who has hitherto fought with a great deal of courage and success. And if we judge from his perseverance he is impelled by no small force to the support of the cause he has undertaken. But Mechanics (if not daily experience) teach us that any force may be overcome by the application of a proper power.

A spectacle of weeping has lately called the attention of the Virginians. A sail of 300 vessels from Cape Francois containing the remains of the wretched inhabitants of that place.<sup>6</sup> The towns of Richmond, Wm.burg and Norfolk were liberal enough to advance near 6,000 Dol. for their immediate relief. I would have been at Norfolk at the very time this fleet arrived where I had an appointment to meet Mr. Robinson but was prevented by a great inflammation in



my eyes occasioned by the excessive heat of the weather in which I rode from P. Edward. I have been studying anatomy, but not as a physician, it is very pleasing and highly worthy the particular notice of anybody who reads for amusement, or general information. The greatest difficulty in learning must be, I presume, the majority of their names infer origin, insertion and uses.

Write to me as soon as possible, and you will not find any neglect in, Dr. Sir,

Your nephew, &  
most humble servant

July 30, 1793

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Doctor Charles Harris,

Since I wrote to you, a letter from Cousin Edwin dated about May 1st came to hand by post. He was well, had become a whig, and is very much attached to the place, a sure sign of diligence. College never pleases an idler. He hates his tutors and even the very ground he is confined to.——

DOCTOR CHARLES HARRIS, ESQ.

Cabarrus

No. Carolina.

<sup>1</sup> Petersburg was on the regular stage route from Philadelphia southward.

<sup>2</sup> Probably George Bruce, member of the general assembly from Guilford, 1798-1801.

<sup>3</sup> Major Thomas Harris, brother of Robert Harris and uncle of Charles W. Harris. He was a brave Revolutionary officer of the Continental line and fought under Washington at Monmouth and Trenton. Transferred South, he was severely wounded and taken prisoner upon Gates's defeat at Camden in August, 1780. In 1793 he was Federalist candidate in his district against Matthew Locke, Republican, but was defeated.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Locke, of Rowan, member of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Congresses, 1793-1799. He was now at an advanced age (born in 1730, died 1801) and had been prominent in the affairs of North Carolina during her transition from colony to state. He was an active participant in the Regulator troubles of 1770-71, at which date he was county member from Rowan in the Colonial Assembly, serving in that capacity until 1775. In the latter year he became a member of the 3rd Provincial Congress of North Carolina and was likewise a member of the 4th and 5th. In the last he assisted at the construction of our first state constitution in 1776.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel C. Caldwell, son of Rev. David Caldwell of Guilford. He was born in 1768, was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Orange at nineteen years of age, and in February, 1792, became pastor of Sugar Creek and Howewell churches in Mecklenburg county. He served the Sugar Creek Church continuously for thirty-five years until his death in 1826, being one of the best beloved and most useful men of his day. He married Abigail Paine Alexander,

daughter of John McKnit Alexander, signer of the "Mecklenburg Declaration" and secretary of the convention.

<sup>a</sup> Foote's Sketches, p. 195, show that during Caldwell's "first ministrations in these congregations (Hopewell and Sugar Creek) it pleased God to send a reviving time, in consequence of which there were upward of seventy young communicants admitted to the Lord's Table in one day."

<sup>1</sup> These were French colonial refugees fleeing from Cape Francois (now Cape Haytien) on the north coast of the island of San Domingo. In 1791 the slaves of Hayti, France's most profitable colony, inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution, rose in rebellion against their masters and so overwhelming was their superiority in numbers they soon had the mastery. Horrible things were done in the island until Toussaint L'Ouverture, by his genius as statesman as well as warrior, came to the head of the movement and brought a semblance of order into the land. Many of the fleeing French colonials found safety in the smaller islands of France in the Windwards; many took shelter in Cuba under the sovereignty of Spain; many others came to the continent. The body referred to above was perhaps the largest single group that reached our shores, though many of them later went to Louisiana (then a Spanish possession) where they joined other smaller bodies that had made direct for New Orleans.

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## UNIVERSITY

April 10th 1795.

DR. SIR, We have begun to introduce, by degrees the regulations of the University,<sup>1</sup> and as yet have not been disappointed. There is one class in Natural Philosophy & Geography & four in the Languages—

The constitution of this college is on a more liberal plan than any in America, & by the amendments which I think it will receive at the next meeting of the trustees, its usefulness will probably be much promoted. The notion that true learning consists rather in exercising the reasoning faculties, & laying up a store of useful knowledge, than in overloading the memory with words of a dead language, is becoming daily more prevalent—It appears hard to deny a young Gentleman the honour of a College, after he has with much labour & painful attention acquired a competent knowledge of the Sciences; of composing & speaking with propriety in his own language, & has conned the first principles of whatever might render him useful or creditable in the world, merely because he could not read a language 2000 years old. Tho' the laws at present require that the Latin & Greek be understood by a graduate—they will in all probability be mitigated in this respect. These old forms, "which have been sanctioned by time but not by utility" ought to be dispensed with. I have

lately found many good hints on education in a book entitled the rights of woman.—a book of very great merit, the production of an original genius—& penned in such a strong, masterly style that you would scarcely believe it the work of a woman—For we are taught to believe, by many able writers & tolerable accurate observers of mankind that the natural weakness of a woman's body extends to her mind, & becomes characteristic of her thoughts & words as well as of her actions. Miss Mary Wollstonecraft is the lady born effectually to rectify these misrepresentations from which so much evil has spring. Miss' intention is to bring about a total reform in the education of women—. But takes occasion to speak of the errors in the present plan of teaching young men & Boys in Europe. "The memory" says she "is loaded with unintelligible works, to make "askew of, without the understanding's acquiring any distinct ideas; but "only that education deserves emphatically to be termed cultivation of "mind, which teaches young people how to begin to think." She effectually over throws Chesterfield's plan of bringing up boys. The amendments which she proposes are too Numerous to be detailed in a letter, but are such as do the greatest honor to the authoress & may be highly beneficial to mankind—— That there is much wrong in the old manner of educating is plain & whatever alterations will be made in our University will be made by those who can be actuated by no other principle than general utility—At present we find much difficulty in procuring books - The trustees have ordered 200 Dol. to be expended for that purpose; but it is very uncertain when the Books will arrive; Dr. Williamson<sup>2</sup> is commissioned to purchase & he is so totally engaged about his own book<sup>3</sup> which he is preparing for the press, that he may forget others of less importance - - Col. Moore<sup>4</sup> presents us with Globes Mr. Benehan<sup>5</sup> with an air pump as soon as it can be procured - We will shortly have an Electrical Machine & other trifles.

Our society is not so good at this place as we could wish. My only resort is to Mr. Ker who makes ample amends to me

for the want of any other - he is a violent Republican & is continually deprecating the Aristocratical principles which have lately prevailed much in our Executive.<sup>6</sup> The debates on self-created societies<sup>7</sup> has brought to light many unrepublican principles that have been secretly growing in the bosom of our government. The Revd. Stanhope Smith<sup>8</sup> has in the last winter become a politician - He declaims against Libertinism in politics as being attended by no less an evil than Atheism -- Smith has been long known to be an aristocrat & he is not a man of such conciliating manner as to have avoided the creating some personal enemies. A writer styled Arbiter in Oswald[']s paper<sup>9</sup> is not delicate in his remarks on the vice-president & is indeed illiberal in some general reflections on the Clergy -- Smith's sermon referred to by Arbiter on the subjects of national Gratitude lies on my table - It has many fine turned periods; many fine thoughts - But besides Mr. Arbiter's objections - His description of the present government is too highly coloured to be the copy of a human fabrication, his Encomium on the President is quite fulsome. Tho' he be the greatest man in America, it smells strong of British seasoning. In page 23 he says "I see him like a rock in the midst of the ocean, receive unshaken all its waves, violence, intrigue, faction, dash themselves to pieces against him, & fall in empty murmurs at his feet." --

I have been engaged in such a manner since I arrived here, that I have done but little for myself; Blackstone's 1mo. Vol. is nearly finished but the remaining vol. will require much more time and attention. I wish to ground myself well in the principles of Law, yet have made no provision for supplying books of a proper kind. I have interested myself much in the education of my brother;<sup>10</sup> he is now growing fast & receiving none of those improvements which he ought. I could not prevail with my father to let him come to this place. I wish you would again mention it to him in a way that you may think proper; it can scarcely be pecuniary want that hinder his complying with my request. Nor can it be I hope, any distrust of my principles, as I have

heard suggested; he & I have ever been very free in speaking on tenets, & I never observed any great degree of disapprobation. If the latter be the cause I have no more to say -- . Please send me your communications by every opportunity.

I am yours  
with much  
respect

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Doctor Charles Harris.

Aunt Sally will please accept of my best wishes for her happiness & Mrs. Ker<sup>11</sup> has particularly requested that her respects may be received thro' the medium of my Letter, tho' never acquainted personally with aunt,<sup>12</sup> by hearsay she is interested in her welfare.

DOCTOR CHARLES HARRIS  
Cabarrus County.

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<sup>1</sup> The University was formally opened the 15th of January, 1795, with the Reverend David Ker the presiding and only professor. The first student, Hinton James, of Wilmington, arrived the 12th of February. The number reached forty-one by the end of the term, the Monday after the 10th of July, when the first vacation began. Ker had been chosen by the trustees in January, 1794, to launch the institution. He was a Presbyterian minister, then residing in Fayetteville. He was a recent Scotch-Irish immigrant and had received his education at Trinity College, Dublin. Harris had been chosen in March to tutor in mathematics and was just now assuming his duties. The "regulations" referred to were a "Plan of studies and By-Laws," reported by a Committee of the Trustees and ratified by the board, January 10, 1794. According to the plan, instruction in the new institution for the time should be in belles-lettres, the languages, particularly English, a client and modern history, botany, agriculture (theory and practice), the principles of architecture, astronomy, and natural philosophy by the experimental method. Dr. Battle attributes (History of the University of North Carolina, Vol. 1, p. 49) the virtues of this well balanced plan to the influence of Dr. Samuel E. McCorkle, chairman of the committee on a "Plan of Studies," and to Dr. Hugh Williamson, probably the most enthusiastic member, Davie excepted. It is also a matter of interest that Harris, the second teacher chosen, was, as shown by the context of his letter, so thoroughly in sympathy with the practical character of the curriculum.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hugh Williamson, a resident of Edenton and member of the board of Trustees of the University. He was born in Pennsylvania, 1735; graduated at the University of Pennsylvania in 1757; professor of mathematics in the University of Pennsylvania, 1760-64, resigned and studied medicine in Edinburgh, Scotland; settled for practice in Philadelphia in 1772. Having removed to North Carolina, Williamson in 1782 represented the borough of Edenton in the state Assembly and in the same year was chosen a member of the Continental Congress, serving first to 1785 and again from 1787-1788. He was a delegate to the Philadelphia Convention and signed the completed Constitution, and was a representative in Congress under the Constitution from 1790 to 1793. He died in 1819, then resident in New York.

<sup>3</sup> Probably Williamson's "Climate of America," published in 1811; or his "History of North Carolina," published in 1812.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Moore, member of the board of Trustees, 1789-1807, a Revolutionary patriot and commander of North Carolina Continental forces at Charleston during the British attack upon that port in 1776. In 1781-82 he raised and commanded a volunteer force to assist in harassing Cornwallis in his marches through the state. In 1798 he was elected a judge of the Superior Court of North Carolina, and in the following year, upon the death of Justice James Iredell of the United States Supreme Court, Moore was appointed by President Adams to fill his place. He served until 1805, resigning on account of ill health, and died in 1810.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Bennahan, of Hillsborough, an early friend of the University and a trustee from 1799 to 1804.

<sup>6</sup> During his second term (1793-1797) President Washington, now held in such grateful regard by all his countrymen, was not spared caustic criticism by that body of opinion which was rapidly being welded by Jefferson and his lieutenants into the Republican party. Democratic ideals, to be worked out through the principle of popular sovereignty, characterized this party and brought it into sharp contrast with whatever forces that seemed to emphasize "classism" in the nation and over-centralization of power in its government. Washington, while deprecating political divisions in the citizenship, leaned toward the Federalists, who opposed the rising tide of social and political ideals of Jeffersonian democracy. Hence he incurred the censure of possessing "aristocratical principles," a charge tending to discredit in the minds of the Republicans.

<sup>7</sup> Washington was the first president of the "Society of the Cincinnati," founded at the end of the Revolution among the officers of the army, membership in which was to be perpetuated in the eldest male descendant of original members. Its objects, besides forming an hereditary order, were to promote friendships formed in the war and to deliberate in secret upon the welfare of the country. The hereditary feature and secret deliberation purpose aroused bitter criticism and denunciation among the popular leaders, the storm growing so great that the Society suspended its meetings for a number of years. It had seemed to the democratic masses an effort to establish an hereditary aristocracy, and so organized as to have undue weight upon the life of the government and country.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Stanhope Smith, D. D., LL. D., president of Princeton University from 1795 to 1812 (resigned). He was an arts graduate of Princeton in 1768. (See note to a subsequent letter).

<sup>9</sup> Oswald, Eleazer, Publisher of the Independent Gazetteer, or the Chronicle of Freedom. (Phila.) 1782-1796. He was a violent opponent of the policies of the Federalist party and particularly of Alexander Hamilton as a political leader. Oswald, though an Englishman, entered the ranks of the American Army during the Revolution and fought under Arnold both at Quebec and at Saratoga.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Wilson Harris entered the University sometime within the year, probably in August.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Ker, wife of David Ker, born in Ireland 30th of March, 1757; died in Natchez, Mississippi, 20th of November, 1847.

<sup>12</sup> Mrs. Sara Harris Harris, first wife of Dr. Charles Harris. After her death Dr. Harris married Lydia Houston Brevard.

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UNIVERSITY.

DR. SIR,

June 1st, 1795.

By Col. Osborn<sup>1</sup> I received your letter & am doubly glad that Heriot<sup>2</sup> is in such a good state of health - It must add much to the happiness of your family -- Your business as

physician having increased so much within a year past that if ever you had any serious intentions of coming to this place, you must before now have relinquished it altogether. Many of our trustees are for immediately filling several professorships with proper persons -- and at any rate if every thing succeeds tolerably - it cannot be long before there is a professor of Chemistry, Anatomy, & -- There is no physician nearer to this place than Hillsborough, some of our students from the East, being very delicate are frequently attacked with returns of their Disorders & have suffered for the want of medicine - I have therefore with the advice of Mr. Ker determined to keep a small apartment of Medicine for the accommodation of the students & the neighbourhood should they think proper to apply - until some physician shall think it worth his while to settle near us -- This I undertake without the most distant prospect of making any thing by it. The medicine I will give out at the cost & charges. If any advantages accrue they will be the pleasure I shall receive from finding myself useful & necessary to any person & the renewing occasionally that smattering of physic which I learnt when with you, an acquisition that I never wish to lose.

Inclosed I send you a plan of the University lands - the village - ornamental grounds springs, & -- But it would be unnecessary to enter into a Geographical description - The general opinion is that the place is most happily situated, - a delightful prospect, charming groves, medicinal springs - light & wholesome air - & inaccessible to vice - the last property Revd. Pettegrew<sup>3</sup> bishop from Edenton added when he visited us. I send you also a print which is to be put on every book with the donor's name. --

I am, sir, with sincerity

yours CHAS W. HARRIS.

Doctor Charles Harris.

Make my respects agreeable to Aunt Sally and Elihu. --

DOCTOR CHARLES HARRIS,  
Cabarrus.



<sup>1</sup> Colonel Adlai Osborne, of Rowan, a Trustee of the University from 1789 to 1814. He graduated at Princeton in 1768 and fought through the Revolution, beginning his military service as lieutenant colonel of the 2nd North Carolina Continental Regiment in 1775. He was father of two sons, Alexander and Edwin Jay, who received diplomas with the first class graduated by the University (1798), and another, Adlai, who graduated in 1802, and still another, Spruce McCoy, who graduated in 1808.

<sup>2</sup> The "Heriot" referred to in this and the following letter is probably a daughter of Dr. Charles Harris, though the editor has only the context to substantiate this assumption. He further believes she is the same person called "Peggy" in subsequent letters.

<sup>3</sup> Reverend Charles Pettigrew, of Lake Phelps, Tyrrell County, father of John and Ebenezer Pettigrew, two students in the University (1795-1797). Ebenezer Pettigrew was a representative in Congress, 1835-1837. The elder Pettigrew was chosen a bishop in the Protestant Episcopal organization, but seems never to have been consecrated, refusing to go to Philadelphia for that purpose because of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 in that city.

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UNIVERSITY,  
July 21st, 1795.

DR. SIR,

I have just returned from a short tour which I made through Chatham after our visitation<sup>1</sup> on the 13th instant. At which time I had the pleasure of seeing Dr. McCorkle<sup>2</sup> but could not get time enough to write a letter to you - This morning I heard from Mrs. Hogan that your family was well except Heriot who is ill with the chin-cough - I would have been very happy in receiving a few lines by her. The number of students in the commencement of orders<sup>3</sup> will amount to 54 -- Such numbers crowding in the trustees thought proper to make some further provision for their accommodation & instruction -- They determined to proceed as soon as possible to the large building<sup>4</sup> - 120 feet long—56 broad, 3 stories high - They are to receive proposals at the next general assembly. But as such a work could not be in any degree of readiness in less than two years - the building commissioners are ordered to build a two story wooden house with 6 large rooms and a school room, with a purpose to accommodate the younger boys & is to be termed the Grammar school<sup>5</sup> - When this house becomes no more necessary for its present purposes it is intended to be converted into a dwelling house for some future professor who may have a family - In a rough statement of the funds by the trustees they amounted to \$15,460 -- \$10,000 of this they desire to lay out in purchasing stock 6 per cent, that interest may be a

permanent provision for the University. You must be certain that with our present number - our hands must be very full of business. It is a most difficult thing to procure a deserving teacher. A Grammar master is now wanted to take charge of the house which is to be built directly -- Mr. Ker and I have liberty to procure one at 130 Dol. per an. & board. Several have been proposed but none that could be altogether approved. With this day's post I dispatch a letter to a Mr. Brown, an acquaintance of mine on James River - I have great hopes that he will accept of the offer & therefore we can do nothing until an answer arrives - We have at length determined to collect a Museum<sup>6</sup> at this place -- the trustees unanimously came into the idea - & have agreed to use all their influence individually to procure curiosities - A number of gentlemen on the seaboard have been engaged to procure marine productions - But it belongs to the back country gentlemen to favour us with many curiosities, with which this country, particularly the S. Western territory abounds - These scattered about in every bodies hands, soon become lost & are never of any general advantage -- but when collected will become the source of amusement and instruction to thousands -- & when a number is collected due care will be taken to preserve them -- As you have considerable genius in this way & at the same time a warm friend to this institution, I hope you will interest yourself and your acquaintances to collect something worth while and forward them to us - They should be accompanied with labels or letters, showing where they were sent from, and giving some philosophical account of them, I intend to take upon me to write to Cumberland<sup>7</sup> this purpose - There are certain times of the year when many go from your neighbourhood. I will endeavor to have letters conveyed to my father before that time, but if I should not, and a favorable opportunity offers, you would do us a favor to write to Dr. Donald and George McWhirter on this subject - & also mention to my father to write to some of his relations in the same place - It will be well to request the persons to whom you write that they send

a letter informing me how far it will be in their power to assist us - Various petrified objects, uncommon fruits, curious stones, bones of non-descript animals, specimens of Indian clothing and their arts and manufactures will all be very acceptable - The Oil which Uncle Nathaniel<sup>8</sup> brought from Cumberland is well worth preserving, perhaps you could send it by some early chance attended with a description of the place where it is found. We have a blank-book into which we enter all curiosities with the Donor's name & the description attending it. Write to me by post. When will you visit us. Give my kindest respects to Aunt Sally<sup>9</sup> -----

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Doctor Charles Harris

The only curiosity yet received is an Ostrich egg from Judge Williams<sup>10</sup> - Inform Col. Smith<sup>11</sup> that Robert<sup>12</sup> was very well about six days ago when he started to see Mark - I expect him back two days hence - Col. Smith would do something in collecting for the Museum.

DR. CHARLES HARRIS,  
N. Carolina.

By post  
postage paid  
at Chapel-Hill.

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<sup>1</sup> The first University Commencement, July 13, 1795. In pursuance of an ordinance of the board of Trustees it was the duty of one trustee, in alphabetical order, from each judicial district, to visit the University at examination times and report on result of their inspection to the board. This practice did not last long.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Eusebius McCorkle was born near Harris' Ferry, Lancaster county, Pennsylvania. His parents, Scotch-Irish immigrants, removed from Pennsylvania to Rowan County, North Carolina, when their son was about ten years old. He received preparations for college under Rev. David Caldwell in Guilford. He entered Princeton and took his arts degree in 1772, returned home and became pastor of Thyatira church in Rowan, serving in this capacity until his death (in the pulpit) 21st June, 1811. In addition to his labors as a most useful Presbyterian minister for a period of thirty years, he conducted a classical school at his house in Rowan, and so effectual an instructor was he that of the seven young men composing the first graduating class at the University (1799), six of them had been trained by him. He was trustee from 1789 to 1801 and at the date of the above letter, chairman of the board. For an extended sketch of the life and services of Dr. McCorkle, see Foote's Sketches of North Carolina, pp. 350-362.

<sup>3</sup> The second term of the University began the middle of August, 1795.

<sup>4</sup>The South Building at the University, originally called "Main;" its corner stone was laid in 1798 but it was not finally completed until 1814.

<sup>5</sup>The Grammar School went into operation in 1796, with an advanced student, Richard Simms, as temporary master. In December Nicholas Delvaux and Samuel Allen Holmes were made instructors in it, though Holmes was soon advanced to a tutorship in the University, his place in the Grammar School being taken by William Richards, a strolling English actor. (A note on Richards appears below).

<sup>6</sup>For a partial list of the specimens gathered by interested donors for the University's early museum, see Battle, History of the University of North Carolina, Vol. 1, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup>The Tennessee country along Cumberland River. Immigration in these years was setting strong toward the trans-mountain region.

<sup>8</sup>Probably a maternal uncle of the writer. Charles W. Harris had no uncle on his father's side named Nathaniel.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Charles Harris was twice married, his first wife (above) being Sara Harris, and the second Lydia Brevard Houston.

<sup>10</sup>John Williams, of Granville, Superior Court judge from 1778 to 1790, and Trustee of the University from 1789 to 1799.

<sup>11</sup>Probably Robert Smith, of Cabarrus, lieutenant in the 4th regiment of North Carolina Continental troops in the Revolution.

<sup>12</sup>Robert Smith, doubtless son of "Col. Smith," was registered at the University in 1795. He did not graduate.

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UNIVERSITY,  
Aug. 13, 1795.

DR. UNCLE,

I was happy in being informed by a letter from Capt. Houston<sup>1</sup> that your family is increased by a son<sup>2</sup> & that all is well - I should have expected to receive the first intelligence of such an occurrence from yourself - It was altogether unforeseen by me. Every addition to your family will certainly make you more of the citizen. Tho' your sincere & general benevolence had already made you a warm friend to our institution & every plan for public Utility, yet since the birth of a son you must feel yourself more nearly interested in the affairs of the University. --

Our number is now fifty-six - & a great prospect of increasing considerably in a short time. We have used our endeavours to procure another assistant. But have not been successful. We have written to a young man of my acquaintance who lives below Williamsburg in Virginia & expect an answer by the next post. ---

Our news at this place has given us more trouble & disappointment than information - I joined Mr. Ker in getting Brown's Daily paper<sup>3</sup> but it has not arrived by the two last

posts. & if it does not come more regularly we must discontinue it. There is an universal uproar against the treaty<sup>4</sup>. It is said that we must garrison & defend the western posts, for the benefit of Brittish merchants - ; that the East-india trade was on a better footing before; that the West india trade is entirely destroyed - ; that the hands of our legislators are tied down, that they can never take such measures for their future security as the patriotic Madison once proposed -- that the reciprocity held forth in several articles is a mere nullity. The Fayetteville Politicians have risked their credit in toasting this prodigy of negotiations while other companies were openly drinking him & his treaty to hell & damnation -- There has been some disagreeable business in New York on this subject & the great financier Hamilton<sup>5</sup> has been very roughly handled by the people because he was supposed a friend to the treaty.

The museum has made but small progress - & consists of only one Ostrich egg<sup>6</sup> -- . I hope when it is generally known that such a collection is making in this place we shall receive considerable assistance.

I had a very favoourable opportunity about three days ago, of sending letters immediately to Cumberland by a gentleman who would travel with expedition -- I endeavoured to interest David Wilson, Jamcs Wilson & Dr. Donald in making collections & if no accident happens they can make some return before Winter.

My law-progress, you must conclude is slow from the great share of business & attention to which is at present necessary for me to apply myself, - tho' slow, it is I think firm & determined ---

I am, dear sir, with  
much respect  
Your's

Dr. Charles Harris.

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

DOCTOR CHARLES HARRIS,  
Cabarrus.

<sup>1</sup> Probably Captain James Houston, of Lincoln County, an active Whig in Revolutionary days and whose company contributed greatly to the defeat of the Tories in the battle of Ramseurs' Mill, June 20, 1780. An alternative supposition as to the identity of the "Capt. Houston" above is that he was the father of William Houston of Iredell, who was a member of the first graduating class at the University (1798).

<sup>2</sup> William Shakespeare Harris, born 1795, became a worthy representative of his father's family, though he never attained or desired political preferment. He served his county as representative in the lower branch of the state legislature in 1820, 1852, 1860 and 1862.

<sup>3</sup> Probably the "Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser," a daily newspaper published at Philadelphia from 1794 to 1800 by Andrew Brown and Samuel Relf, and continued after 1800 as "Relf's Gazette."

<sup>4</sup> The Jay Treaty, concluded by Chief Justice John Jay with England in November, 1794, and submitted to the Senate in June, 1795, and ratified by the constitutional two-thirds majority without a vote to spare. Even the Federalists reprobated the treaty, while the Republicans universally denounced it as a rank betrayal of American sovereignty. It certainly seemed far from advantageous to American interests. By its terms our western posts were to be evacuated by the British, though without compensation for their long retention (1783-1796). The Mississippi River was to be open to British shipping; American citizens to be recompensed for British captures of their ships in the West Indies; French privateers to be shut out of our ports. The treaty even conceded the English contention that a natural flag could not protect non-contraband enemy goods upon the high seas. It made no recompense for the large number of American slaves carried off by the English armies at the close of the Revolution; and secured no redress for the impressment of seamen from American vessels, nor any promise that the practice would be abandoned. A number of other important provisions were also favorable to the English. The treaty, however, had the one virtue of averting war with England toward which we were rapidly drifting.

<sup>5</sup> Hamilton even at first condemned the treaty, pronouncing it "an old woman's treaty," but soon came to its defense in order to save the credit of the Federalist party. At one open air meeting in New York City he was stoned for attempting to defend it.

<sup>6</sup> Judge John Williams, of Granville, superior court judge from 1778 to 1790 and trustee, 1789-1799, was the donor of the ostrich egg.

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CHAPEL HILL,  
Nov. 12th, 1795.

DR. SIR,

I wrote to you some time ago, since which nothing of importance has occurred in our business. Our trustees are not likely to do much during the meeting of the assembly -- The more I know of their affairs & of my own dispositions & qualifications - the more I am determined against engaging in their business for life - I of late made an effort to procure some law books & Motherby but was disappointed -- I will again make another attempt at Philadelphia when I have collected a little more money -- With my father<sup>1</sup> I send an extract of Lavatie's Phisiognomy & hope

you will accept of it & let My father & the rest of our family read it - It is a book which has afforded me much amusement & I hope some real improvement - It appears to me, because I am not well enough acquainted with the science, that his observations are often vague & uncertain - But what ever uncertainty there may be in it - I am fully convinced that it is well worth the attention of a young man who in life may have all characters to deal with & ought early to begin to learn to distinguish them ----- I have sometimes thought that Motherby's Dictionary might not at this time be so agreeable to you or useful - I would take pleasure in procuring any others if you would only take the trouble of mentioning them - If you send me no advice of this kind I will order the book which I first intended -- I am more & more sensible of the advantages of which my reading on several subjects with you is likely to bring me & tho' I did not study them in that particular manner which I might, yet some general ideas remain strongly impressed on my mind which gives me a pleasure in, & a taste for a further improvement in them - Give my kindest respects to Aunt Sally & believe me your most

sincere friend

Dr. Chas. Harris -----

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

I have not been able to write as I would wish- -I have been all the time with Mr. Ker<sup>2</sup> & my father who are comparing their religious creeds -- Mr. Ker & Mrs. Ker present their compliments to you & Aunt & assure you that we often think of you

DOCTOR CHARLES HARRIS,

By Robert Harris Esq.

Cabarrus.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Harris, of Cabarrus, father of Charles W. Harris, appears from the context to have been visiting his son at Chapel Hill upon this date. A sufficient reference to him appears in the preface.

<sup>2</sup> Though the editor has never seen any statement as to where the bachelor Harris lived during his two years of service to the University, the first two years of its actual life, his intimate relations with the Ker family, as indicated in the above letter and others of the series, tend to prove that he resided with this family who occupied the president's house (then upon the site of the present Swain Hall), begun in 1793 and completed for occupancy by 1795.



UNIVERSITY,  
June 1st. 1796.

DR. FRIEND,<sup>1</sup>

In your last letter you expressed some uncertainty respecting the place in which you would attempt the practice of Physic. This, in a great measure prevented me from writing as often as I could wish. You see by my address that I am still a teacher tho' much against my inclination -- It is difficult in this illiterate part of the United States to procure any person that is able and willing to undertake the arduous task of instructing. I continue in my present situation because the trustees cannot procure any person to perform the duties of my office. I earnestly desire to be engaged in some professional business in the world -- One of my motives for writing you at this time was to receive some information of Mr. Caldwell<sup>2</sup> who graduated one year before us & spoke the first Salutatory Oration -- I have heard that he has been employed in teaching ever since he left College -- if he is not yet permanently settled, and has no objection against removing farther south I make no doubt but he may be placed in a situation in this state altogether agreeable -- I must beg leave to trouble you in this affair & request that you would by post give me any information concerning his place of abode; employment &, which you may think necessary -- Or if you can let him know of the enquiries which I have made, it will be still a greater favor.

The University contains 37 students -- The employment which I would relinquish to Mr. Caldwell if he would. agreeable to the trustees is the Professorship of Mathematics & Natural Philosophy worth at present more than 500 Dol. per Anno. & in time to come will be more valuable.

I am your sincere friend,

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Dr. Jno. C. Otto.

Postage paid.

I mentioned Mr. Caldwell's name to the trustees. Write by the first post to Chapel-hill. University of N. C.

DOCTOR JOHN C. OTTO,  
Philadelphia, or  
Woodbury - -

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. John Conrad Otto, to whom this letter is written, was an A. B. graduate of Princeton, of the class of 1792 (the class of Harris). He received his A. M. from Princeton in 1795, and an M. D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1796. From 1798 to 1802 he was physician to the Philadelphia Dispensary, and from 1813 to 1835 he was a physician in the Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. From 1840 to the date of his death in 1844 he was Vice-President of the College of Physicians, Philadelphia.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Caldwell, A. B. Princeton, 1791; Tutor, Princeton, 1795-96; Clerk of Faculty, Princeton, 1796; Professor Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, University of North Carolina, 1796-1817; President of University of North Carolina, 1804-12, 1816-35; A. M. Princeton, 1794, also University of North Carolina in 1799 (honorary); and D. D. Princeton, 1816. He died in 1835. For a full account of the services of Caldwell to the University of North Carolina, see Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, Vol. 1, p. 173, *et seq.*

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NASSAU HALL.

SIR,

I have just received a letter from you by Mr. Otto requesting information respecting my present employment and expectations.<sup>1</sup> I am still unsettled in the world, tho' I have passed thro' most of the time I allotted for obtaining a profession. It has been my purpose for sometime past to apply for license in the ministry next spring. This, however, is an event perfectly at my own discretion. And I am unable yet to say how far your letter may influence my decision. I have been two years and an half studying divinity, and if I had chosen might have requested license some time ago. I am now employed in the business of tutor in this college. I commenced a year from the present date. I should feel myself so diffident with respect to the duties of a teacher of mathematics that I should scarcely know how to venture the responsibility of such an office, were it not that I had some time since an opportunity of becoming acquainted in some

measure with my strength. And tho' I still apprehend that I do not possess the qualifications requisite to such an office, I believe I should be able to prepare myself with assiduity and attention. I wish to receive further information of the situation of affairs, before I form or express an opinion. To know the several offices of the University and the names of those who fill them—the buildings that belong to it—& the conditions of the funds, if there are any, the classes and number of students in each—under what regulations the students are at present and whether on the whole you think the labor of teaching, fatiguing and oppressive. I wish you to mention also the expenses and whether the country and situation is healthy. By being so particular in my enquiries, I would not have you imagine that I would expect to be accommodated in the best manner with everything that is agreeable and convenient. But as I am almost entirely ignorant on all the subjects, I have enumerated, that I may form any determination at all it will be necessary that I be able in some degree to estimate them. You know the advantages my present station possesses, and therefore will easily conceive that it would be by no means wise to barter them away for an uncertainty. Mr. Hobart<sup>2</sup> is my colleague, and tho' I have not the happiness of a personal or intimate acquaintance with him, yet I have the satisfaction of being assured that I may rely without reserve on every information you may offer, and that you or those with whom you are connected may not want the same advantages of information on your side, Dr. Smith,<sup>3</sup> Dr. Minto<sup>4</sup> or any of the people of Princeton in whom you are willing to confide, will no doubt give you every information you may ask. I ought now to mention that it will not by any means be convenient for me to leave this place till next fall after commencement. From your own knowledge of affairs here, you will be able to judge the reason of this.

MR. C. W. HARRIS,  
Chapel Hill,  
North Carolina.

<sup>1</sup> This letter to Harris, in the bound manuscript volumes of unpublished records of the University is in Caldwell's handwriting, but without date and signature. It is doubtless a copy of his original letter to Harris, made by himself and placed in the faculty archives, as a matter of record, during his early period of service to the University. It is his reply to either Harris' inquiries of Dr. J. C. Otto about Caldwell, (see preceding letter), or his reply to a letter from Harris to himself direct, but transmitted through Otto. Its date should probably be the latter part of June, 1796. The succeeding letter in the series, of date July 24th, is Harris reply, continuing the negotiations for Caldwell's services and incidentally throwing a clear light upon the conditions, internal, and external, of the eighteen-months-old University of North Carolina.

<sup>2</sup> John Henry Hobart, A. B., Princeton 1793; Tutor 1796-1798; Clerk of Faculty Princeton 1796-1798; Professor Pastoral Theology and Sacred Oratory General Seminary, N. Y., 1821-30; Assistant Protestant Episcopal Bishop, New York 1811-16; Protestant Episcopal Bishop New York 1816-30; A. M. Princeton 1796; and D. D. Union 1807.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Stanhope Smith, Tutor Princeton 1770-73; Rector Hampden-Sidney Academy 1775-79; Clerk Board of Trustees Princeton 1781-95; Treasurer Princeton 1783-86; Professor Moral Philosophy and Theology Princeton 1789-95; President Princeton 1795-1812; A. B. Princeton 1769; A. M. Princeton 1772; D. D. Princeton, also Yale, 1783; LL. D. Harvard 1810; resigned Presidency Princeton 1812; and died 1819.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Minto, M. A., LL. D., Professor Mathematics and Natural Philosophy Princeton 1787-96, died 1796.

UNIVERSITY July 24th 1796.

SIR,

You will, without doubt, be expecting some account from me long before the arrival of this but I delayed giving an answer to your letter until the meeting of the Board of Trustees which was on the 15th inst. that I might have it in my power to write to you more fully. For as a teacher in the University I had no authority to give you any encouragement that could be relied upon—without the concurrence of the Trustees.

In answer to the several queries which you proposed, I am to inform you that the offices<sup>1</sup> of the University are President, who is professor of Rhetoric & Belles-lettres; Professor of Moral Philosophy; Professor of Natural Philosophy; Professor of Mathematics; of Chemistry; & of Languages—in all five Professorships. Revd Ker who has lately left this place was professor of languages & performed the duties of President pro tempore. Revd McCorkle, D. D. of this state was appointed to the professorship of Moral Philosophy, but as he could not immediately accept of the appointment and the trustees began to be very doubtful respecting his qualifi-

cation for that business the appointment has been retracted.<sup>2</sup> Revd. Holmes is now Professor of Languages. I am the other professor who besides the duties of my particular office, am obliged for the want of teachers to attend to the Moral Philosophy class & perform the duties of President. Besides there are two tutors<sup>3</sup> of the lower classes. As to the classes, the Moral Philosophy class is the first and consists of six young men. They will study Paley, Burlemagni, Montesqueiu, & Mallet's elements of history. The mathematical class will consist of 15 who will study Simson's Euclid, Simson's Algebra, Trigonometry, Surveying, Navigation, and if required, Conic Sections, Projection of the Sphere & Nicholson's Nat. Philosophy & Ferguson's Astronomy. The Geography & Arithmetic class will be composed of 10 students, the Latin class of nearly as many, & there will be five or six in Greek. The tutors each attend to near 30 scholars, so that the whole number will be about 100. I have not been very particular, or accurate in some of the statements of the classes because it is now vacation & the young gentlemen when they meet, will commence their studies in new classes. We imitate Nassau Hall in the conduct of our affairs as much as our circumstances will admit. The Professorship of Mathematics & Natural Philosophy will not be more burdensome nor laborious at this place than at Princeton. I have been at the University since the first commencement of business & determined to devote myself during my stay entirely to its interests. For this reason I have always been employed in duties which were not annexed to my professorship & which I think it will not be necessary for any future professor to perform. To me they were not oppressive. I received my reward in finding myself useful to an institution which was zealously patronized by the whole state. Our situation is without doubt healthy—that was a circumstance which particularly recommended Chapel Hill for the seat of the University. As our state is not favourably situated for commerce, & the University fixed in an interior part of the country you must readily conceive that the expense of clothing

will be something dearer at this place than at Princeton. But boarding is much cheaper, our diet at Commons is preferable to yours and procured at the low rate of 40 Dollars a year. The Trustees will pay for your boarding if you choose to diet at Commons. It has cost me nothing as yet. The buildings already compleated are one wing 98 feet long & 40 broad two stories high containing 16 rooms; an elegant & large house for the President, with out-houses; Steward's house, Kitchen &. The Buildings which are to be erected are a large house 115 feet long 56 broad & three stories; a wing exactly similar to the one above mentioned & placed fronting it; a chapel 50 feet long & 40 broad. I have annexed a small paper which will show you in what order these houses are to be arranged. The Chapel<sup>4</sup> is already contracted for, & will cost near 3,000 Dollars. The foundation will be laid within two weeks. The trustees can at pleasure realize 15,000 Dollars more with which they have determined to commence the large building as soon as they can procure an undertaker. It would be difficult to give any correct statement of the funds. I requested the Treasurer to make out a small account of them, which I purposed to inclose for your satisfaction. This I have not yet received but he assured me that they could not be stated at less than 30,000 Dollars, tho' some of the property was such as could not be immediately productive.<sup>5</sup>

I have now given you a short but I fear not satisfactory answer to your enquiries. From what I have said you will easily perceive that the University labours more at present for the want of good teachers than anything else. Were the buildings compleated and more of the professorships filled there would not be less than 200 students. The professorship of Mathematics is at present worth 500 Dollars & will I am certain in a short time be equal to 600. Yet I may inform you that the society in the neighbourhood of the University is very uncultivated & unenviting. I have no communication with it. When there is a little leisure I ride 12 or 14 miles & there find very agreeable company,<sup>6</sup> & the seminary is

occasionally visited by the most respectable gentlemen in the state. One who resides here will generally be confined to the company of teachers, students or books. Chapel Hill is 25 miles from Raleigh the seat of government. From the newness of the University every thing is rather in an unsettled state, but from present appearances I expect a situation here will within a short time become as agreeable & profitable as any of a like kind in the Union. You might here reasonably enquire why Mr. Ker has relinquished his business and why I intend to follow his example when prospects are so flattering. As to Mr. Ker he went away much against his own will,<sup>7</sup> and as to my self I never could think of spending my life in teaching or I should not alter my situation. The law is my aim, and it is now high time to make some effectual preparation in that way. I gave the trustees warning of my intention six months ago. After all I hope you will not rely too much on what I have said. I could not easily forgive myself should I be, even the innocent cause of persuading you to a situation which might on trial prove less agreeable than that which you at present hold. Consult with your friends in that country & if they should approve of the prospects which open to you from this state, accept of them.

You may calculate without diffidence on all the assistance which I can give you. Your letter I handed to the trustees who gave me liberty to inform you that you might be certain of the appointment should you think proper to accept. Gen. Davie of Hallifax, a leading member of the board, promised to write to you. We expect from London a small apparatus which will probably arrive before Christmas. Our education at Princeton was shamefully & inexcusably deficient in experimental Philosophy, a circumstance which I have often reflected upon with concern. If you have never attended particularly to that subject, before your commencement, you would undoubtedly find it a great advantage to see the Apparatus in Philadelphia & to learn the manner of using different kinds of Electrical Machines, Air-pump, Telescope, Microscope, Camera-Obscura, Magic Lantern,



Quadrants, Sextants, & whatever else you may suppose useful or entertaining. I should have appeared often very ridiculous in my own eyes had I not gotten a smattering of experimental Philosophy by visiting Williamsburgh College in Virginia.

I would thank you to make my respects acceptable to Dr. Smith, Dr. Minto, & Mr. Hobart, if it be not inconsistent with the subject of our correspondence. I would willingly receive the degree of A. M. if I should be thought worthy of it & it could be procured in my absence. I suppose there is some expense attending it, which if you defray I will remit by some opportunity, at any rate when our members return to congress.

If upon the whole you think of accepting our proposal you ought to arrive here between the end of October and the middle of November about which time the classes will again meet & you might at once enter upon your professorship. I am, sir, with all

possible respect your  
servant

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Mr. Joseph Caldwell.

Be kind enough to oblige me with a letter by Post as soon as possible after the reception of this. It would be highly pleasing to know something particular respecting the present situation of my Alma Mater. Direct to Chapel-Hill.

Chapel-Hill

26th July 96

Double

50.

MR. JOSEPH CALDWELL, *Tutor*,  
at Princeton,  
—— New Jersey. ——

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<sup>1</sup> The Trustees, on July 15, 1796, accepted Ker's resignation as presiding professor and promoted Harris to that office. Ker's chair of Rhetoric and Belle-Lettres went unfilled, as did also the chair of Chemistry. Harris assumed the duties of the chair of Natural Philosophy in addition to his own of Mathematics (he having been tutor in the last named subject from the beginning of his service in April, 1795, to the end of the first term in July,

since when he had occupied the professorship). Samuel Allen Holmes was promoted from the Grammar School to the chair of Languages and was assisted by W. L. Richards as tutor in English and French. Holmes' appointment later proved to be of very doubtful benefit to the institution.

<sup>2</sup> Wm. R. Davie, the most influential member of the Board of Trustees, seems not to have been enthusiastic for McCorkle's appointment, and when the latter made his acceptance conditional upon an increase in salary equal to the annual rental value of the presiding professor's house (which he was to occupy, and whose duties he was to assume) in case he was deprived of the use of the house upon the election of a president, the board retracted the appointment. For further details relative to the failure of this appointment see Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina*, Vol. 1, p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> W. L. Richards, Tutor in French and English, and Nicholas Delvaux, Tutor in Latin. Each of these also were teachers in the Grammar School.

<sup>4</sup> The Chapel was completed out of the funds of a donation by General Thomas Person, of Granville, and was named "Person Hall" in his honor. It was the east wing of the present building upon the campus still bearing the name of Person Hall.

<sup>5</sup> This property which could not be immediately productive consisted mainly of land warrants to Tennessee lands donated by Colonel Benjamin Smith (afterwards Governor) in 1790. Nothing was realized from them before 1815.

<sup>6</sup> Harris' outlet for social intercourse was Hillsborough, twelve miles distant.

<sup>7</sup> There seem to have been two reasons for the disseverance of Ker's connections with the University after a year and half of service: first, his inability to cope with the "unruly" spirit of the student body and, second, the fact that he had developed heterodox political and religious principles. The bulk of the young University's support, both in the Trustees and in the patronage, was Federalist politically and staunch Presbyterian in matters spiritual. Ker became a "furious Republican" and at the same time shook off his Presbyterian orthodoxy. After leaving the University he migrated to the territory of Mississippi and in 1802 was appointed a territorial judge by President Jefferson, in which office he served until his death in 1805.

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#### PART OF MR. CALDWELL'S LETTER <sup>1</sup>

"I showed our correspondence to Dr. Smith the day "after I received your last letter. He read it and hesitated "not to advise my acceptance. He is not well satisfied with "his present situation, as he informed me before I left him. "He looked at the plan chosen for the buildings on Chapel hill & went so far, as to say that he would be ready to relinquish his establishment & prospects here & remove to your University, if the trustees or those in whose power it should be, would give up the disposition and direction of affairs into his hands, the ordering of the buildings in their structure and situation, of the environs of the University, the choice of the Library &, &. He thought that by the additional expense of a few thousand dollars more than what the present

plan will require, the University might be made superior in elegance as well as convenience to any thing in our country. It is an undeniable truth that Dr. Smith is a man of superior cultivation and taste. These are so far from being superficial, that they are entirely of the solid and substantial kind. His reputation as a man of genius, of science, and of talents peculiarly fitted for instruction and discipline are too well known to you & to the people of the U. States to need any explanation. He has a family that must be expensive any where, but particularly in such a place as this; where the inhabitants with whom he is obliged to be in habits of ceremony, affect to be of what themselves would call the highest order. Being on a road which is travelled more than any other in the U. States, his disposition inclines him, and his situation obliges him to receive and entertain, with much expense, visitors at all times. It is by no means necessary for me to inform you that the inhabitants of this place were never agreeable to him nor he to them. As to his health, he declares that he is seriously apprehensive of the effects of the next winter upon it. He has filled the office of president with more mildness than he did that of vice president. The trustees of this place would certainly be very unwilling to part with him.

JOSEPH CALDWELL.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy, in Harris' hand, of Caldwell's reply to the preceding letter. It was appended by Harris to the succeeding letter to James Hogg, of Hillsborough, a member of the Trustee committee on appointments. It is to convey the information both of Caldwell's acceptance of the Chair of Mathematics and the possibility of the acceptance by Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith, president of Princeton, of the presidency of the University of North Carolina should it be offered him. Reading between the lines, one may conclude that unsatisfactory conditions at Princeton at that date, coupled with the fair prospects of the future of the University of North Carolina, were greater in their influence upon Dr. Smith's attitude than the minor causes which Caldwell's letter discloses. However, for reasons probably financial in character, the chance of securing Dr. Smith was let slip by the Trustees, the negotiations never taking the actual form of an offer to him so far as the University records disclose.

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UNIVERSITY Sep. 1st 1796.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I now have the pleasure of informing you that Mr. Caldwell intends to accept of the professorship of Mathematics

at this place. I received his final answer by last Tuesday's post. He will set out on his journey in the first week of next month & will probably arrive about the first of November. I feel a secret pride in finding that the prospects of our national institution are so flattering, as to entice to it men of real abilities and merit; and you who are so entirely devoted to its interest cannot but rejoice that you have thus far been successful in establishing an University. I had communicated to Mr. Caldwell, agreeably to his request, a very particular, and as far as I was able, an accurate account of our affairs, and for his information had enclosed a small, rough plan of the intended situation of the buildings, avenues and walks, all which he shewed to Dr. Smith, and in his last letter had favoured me with the intelligence which I have transcribed into the annexed paper. Of it you are at liberty to make what use you think proper, as you are one of the Committee of correspondence and appointments. After you have perused the paper I beg leave to add the following remarks respecting Dr. Smith. He is as elegant and accurate a classical scholar as any professor in any of the Northern Colleges. He has devoted much time to the study of moral and political Philosophy & the philosophy of nature and we may judge of his progress in these, by some of his publications. He is well versed in Rhetoric & the Belles Lettres his style is said to be neat, & elegant. He is a standard of pronunciation, and his delivery is articulate, & pleasing, his gesture easy and engaging. In short he is possessed of many qualities of an Orator. His age is near fifty; he is rather above the common size & when I knew him, inclined to corpulency. He is universally thought handsome in his person & very polite in his manner. What Mr. Caldwell has related of the conversation between Dr. Smith & himself is in a loose, epistolary style; and the conditions mentioned cannot be supposed to be determinate. The whole I submit to you. For my own part if I know anything of Dr. Smith & the situation of this place I am certain, he would be more useful than any

man you could procure from Connecticut even Bishop Seabury himself.

As to our affairs at present, everything goes on in an ordinary way. The young gentlemen have not put us to the necessity of inflicting any high censures since the commencement of the session, but have applied themselves to their respective studies with much industry and regularity. Mr. Richards who assists in the preparatory school writes a very fine hand & by his method and attention promises to be an acquisition to the University in the way of writing. We expect to see you now & then if it be not inconvenient. Do me the honour of presenting my best respects to your family. I am sir, your most

humble servant

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Dr. James Hogg<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Gavin Oliver will much oblige me by making out a very small abstract of the state of the funds of the University. I spoke to him on that subject at our last examination.

JAMES HOGG, Esquire,  
Hillsborough.

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UNIVERSITY

Sept. 5th. 1796

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received by last post your final answer on the subject of our correspondence—Your determination to accept of the professorship of Mathematics gives me great pleasure, and tho' you will find our institution in an infant state, yet such a foundation has been laid, and so great are the exertions on the part of the trustees, that I entertain scarce any doubts, but it will be brought to perfection in due time. I am sorry that Dr. Smith is not agreeably situated at Princeton. I had often mentioned his name to the trustees, but always supposed that no offers from this state could entice him from Nassau, particularly since he accepted the Presidency. I

wish our trustees could make a removal to the University agreeable and profitable to him; such an event I am certain would be highly useful to our growing institution. At any rate, I will make use of your letter to introduce proposals of that nature. I have already transmitted extracts of it to Gen. Davie of Hallifax and Mr. Hogg of Hillsborough, they are leading trustees, and not unacquainted with Dr. Smith's literary character.

I would advise you to relinquish the idea of coming by water, it will be attended with many difficulties, and prevent you from seeing some of the best parts of the U. States. To travel by stage would cost 50 Dollars before you could arrive at Petersburg, 170 miles from this place. I think it the best plan to purchase a small but good horse and a single chair, you could with this equipage travel very conveniently and as expeditiously as on single horse. In your chair box you could carry many necessaries which you might need before the arrival of your trunk. This plan you may make as cheap as you please and keeping the post road through the city of Washington, Alexandria, near Mt. Vernon, Richmond, Petersburg, &c. you would find much entertainment and improve your knowledge of the Geography of our country & without doubt it would be very serviceable to your health. The loss in the price of the horse could not be considerable, and I would take the chair off your hands. A half-worn chair, if well made, would answer your purpose & be much cheaper. You would save something considerable by filling your trunk with one or two pieces of linen, stockings, shoes, broadcloth and whatever articles of clothing you would need in the course of a year all which are much dearer here than in Philadelphia & sometimes not easily procured.

Your trunks may be addressed to Petersburg as on the annexed paper, where they will be received, and cost of shipping paid by Mr. Grain & Anderson, who will forward them on to Hillsborough immediately, they will receive directions to this purpose long before your trunks can arrive. If no ship for

that place should sail while you are at Philadelphia, Mr. Otto can superintend that business.

I wish to order about 100 Dollars worth of books from Robert Campbell, Bookseller in the city. This I shall do before you set out. You would oblige me by putting them in the same line of conveyance with your trunks & with the same address. I will write to Mr. Otto on the subject, from whom you will receive further accounts. Give my best respects to Dr. Minto, Dr. Smith & Mr. Hobart. I am, sir, with sincerity

Your friend,

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Mr. Joseph Caldwell.

Chapel Hill  
6th Sept. 1796

25

MR. JOSEPH CALDWELL,  
Princeton,  
New Jersey.

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November 18th 1796.

DEAR SON.

About this time I thought to have been with you, but the State of my business is such that I cannot be so long from home without suffering some of my purposes to miscarry. I herewith send you some business<sup>1</sup> that I hope you will transact for me at the Assembly you will find the ground work of it in two papers I send you with this. Some time after Gen. Davidson fell in the defence of the country, the General Assembly willing to do his heirs what Justice they could undertook to settle his Military claims themselves and allowed his heirs the sum of Seven hundred and thirty six pounds Seven shillings for his Services to the United States, and another sum of two hundred and ninety seven pounds from the State of N. Carolina.



After some time the heirs of the deed alledged themselves injured both in the Quality and the Quantity of the allowance made for the services done to the United States, in order to do themselves justice the heirs with the advice and assistance of their friends returned all the pay they had received from the State No. Carolina in order that they might be entitled to have their accounts settled on the same principles other continental officers had and recieve hard cash in lieu of depreciated paper money. The Agent who transacted this business through mistake or ignorance returned the two hundred and ninety seven pounds that had been paid for Militia services together with the allowance that had been made for Continental services you will find from the papers I send you that one thousand and thirty three pounds includes the allowance for both Continental and Militia Services which appears to be all the heirs ever received from North Carolina. To make you to understand the nature of the claim I will state some facts

*First* The allowance made to the heirs of Gen. Davidson by the State of North Carolina was not sufficient when the his account was justly settled in Philadelphia by near three hundred pounds.

*Second* The whole of the pay the heirs ever received from North Carolina was paid back including Militia Services.

*Third* If the heirs of Gen. Davidson had paid back no more than the allowance made them for his Continental Services they would be Intitled to A settlement with the United States.

*Fourthly* The State of North Carolina never refunded that allowance of two hundred and Ninety seven pounds that was made to them for his Militia Services though it was returned into the Treasurers office through ignorance or mistake of the Agent.

From which I infer that Sum of two hundred and Ninety

Seven pounds is yet due from the State of North Carolina to the heirs of Gen. Davidson.

DR. CHARLEY

Your prudence will direct you who to apply to for assistance in bringing forward this Claim Mr. Lock who was one of the engrossing clerks was very helpful to me before in this business Mr. Craven<sup>2</sup> who is Comtrouler can give you the [illegible] respecting this of any person I can Direct you to.

I would be glad you could make it convenient to go to Raleigh with John Davidson<sup>3</sup> who is the bearer of this it is easier doing business of this sort early in the session than towards the last when the members are confused and anxious about their different Interests and caprices any expense you will be at on account of this will be replaced to you. If you succeed in this give the money to Col Phifer<sup>4</sup> or bring it with you when you come home. I am with affection

Yr. Father

ROBT. HARRIS.

Mr. Charles W. Harris.

N. B. Remember me to Bob<sup>5</sup> I hope to see him about New Year.

Before you put in your memorial enquire whether it would be better to petition for the certifiycates that was Returned or Money to the amount.

Addressed:

MR. CHARLES HARRIS  
Chapel Hill.

Endorsed:

GEN. DAVIDSON.

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<sup>1</sup> This letter, the only one of the series written by the father of Charles Wilson Harris, was made available by the courtesy of Mr. R. D. W. Connor, Secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission. Robert Harris' connection with the military claims of the Davidson heirs was due to his marriage with Mrs. Davidson several years after the death of her husband, General William Lee Davidson, in the battle of Cowan's Ford, 1781. William Lee Davidson, of Mecklenburg county, was Major in the fourth of the six regi-

ments raised by North Carolina in 1775 and early 1776 and tendered to Congress for service in the common defense of the country. These troops were taken into the Continental service by Congress on the 7th May, 1775, their officers being duly confirmed. They were marched to the North under General Francis Nash to reinforce the Army of Washington. After arduous service of three years under Washington the remainder of these troops were sent South, Nov., 1779, to reinforce General Benjamin Lincoln in South Carolina. In the meantime Davidson had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Passing through North Carolina he obtained leave to visit his family. When his furlough was about to expire he attempted to rejoin his regiment at Charleston, but found the city so closely beleaguered by the British that it was impossible to do so. When Charleston capitulated, in May, 1780, Davidson's regiment became prisoners of war, thus leaving him without a command. Thereupon he returned to North Carolina and raised in Mecklenburg and adjoining counties a volunteer corps for the purpose of overthrowing the Tories of the back country, who had become particularly aggressive since Lincoln's capitulation at Charleston. He was engaged in this service until General Horatio Gates' defeat on the 16th August, at Camden. In this battle Griffith Rutherford, brigadier-general of North Carolina militia in the Salisbury District, was taken prisoner. The North Carolina Board of War temporarily assigned Henry William Harrington to Rutherford's post and on the 31st August the legislature appointed Davidson to the command as brigadier-general until such time as Rutherford should be released. General Davidson does not appear to have assumed active command in the district until the 1st of January, 1781, at which date he resigned as lieutenant colonel in the Continental Army. One month later, February 1, he was killed at Cowan's Ford, on the Catawba, where he had posted his forces at General Nathaniel Greene's order to oppose the crossing of Cornwallis' Army. Hence arose the claim of his heirs, upon both the United States and the State of North Carolina. Their claims against the United States were under the terms of a resolution of Congress of the 24th August, 1780, which granted half-pay for seven years to the officers of the army who should continue in the service to the end of the war, or to the widows, or orphans of those who should die in the service, to commence from the time of such officer's death. The settlement of both claims by the State of North Carolina was rejected, as noted in the letter. Then the state adjusted the claim for militia service alone, the claim against the United States continuing until finally settled by the 34th Congress, January 1, 1857. The reason for the long delay rested in the fact that Davidson's death did not occur while in the Continental Army and hence, technically, his heirs had no claim under the resolution of Congress of 1780. The settlement of 1857 was therefore an act of grace.

<sup>2</sup> John Craven, of Haliuax, State Comptroller from 1784 to 1808.

<sup>3</sup> Third son of General William Lee Davidson. The other Davidson heirs were: George, William Lee, Ephraim, Parmela, and Margaret.

<sup>4</sup> Caleb Phifer, born at "Cold Water," Cabarrus county (then a part of Anson) April 8, 1749; died July 3, 1811. He represented Mecklenburg in the lower branch of the state legislature from 1778 to 1792; one term excepted, that of 1790. His portion of Mecklenburg being erected into Cabarrus in 1792 he became its first state senator in 1793 and served continuously to 1801. His title of "Colonel" appears to have been a courtesy title, or else confused with that of his brother John, who was major, and lieutenant colonel in the war of the Revolution.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Wilson Harris, son of the writer, and a student in the University. See earlier note.

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HILLSBORO, April 11, 1797.

DEAR SIR,

I have arrived safe at this place and attended the business of the court for one day, but have not gone to the Uni-

versity.<sup>1</sup> The political opinions<sup>2</sup> run strongly against the French who are without reserve called a pack of damn'd villains, the same prevails over all the lower parts of the state with but few solitary exceptions. The relations given by Captains and sailors from the West Indies who have been robbed of everything and have experienced personal insults added to injury have much excited the passions of the people. Mr. Hogg<sup>3</sup> is just from Wilmington and says that the sailors have attempted to raise a mob and drive off the French frigate that now lies in that place, as it is considered very hard that they should lie and furnish themselves in our ports,<sup>4</sup> then sail out and take all our vessels without discrimination. Mr. Hogg attended the play at Wilmington for two evenings where great numbers were present of all classes. In the interludes the company was entertained with music, when the French patriotic tunes were called for, they were incessantly hissed, and the musicians obliged to cease. At one time *God Save the King* was called, a little hissing was heard but the other party drowned it with a general and loud applause. This will serve to show the great change in the minds of the people. Several gentlemen are in town who say they have seen a proclamation of the present president<sup>5</sup> calling a Congress to meet on the last of the month. We do not altogether believe the account as the gentlemen express some doubt respecting the authenticity of the publication. Mrs. Kirkland of whom we were conversing is now on the recovery. Please present my respects to Aunt Sally and am yours,

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Dr. Charles Harris, Esquire.  
Cabarrus.

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<sup>1</sup> This letter was written by Harris at Hillsboro while on his way from Cabarrus to Halifax, where he proposed to take up the pursuit of the law in General Davie's office. He had ended his connection with the University the previous December, his duties as administrative officer of the institution temporarily resting in the hands of Caldwell until James Smiley Gillespie was chosen by the Trustees as principal of the University in December, 1797.

<sup>2</sup> In reference to the all-absorbing question of the European struggle and the relation of our infant republic thereto. North Carolina opinion during the early phases of the French Revolution had been strongly pro-French, but

with the excesses of the "Terror" fresh in mind, and France's persistent efforts to involve the United States in the struggle on her side, together with her rejection, February, 1797, of Charles C. Pinckney as our accredited representative, public opinion in the state veered around and was now running strongly against France.

<sup>3</sup> Either James Hogg, merchant of Wilmington, Fayetteville, and Hillsboro, or his son John Hogg. The elder Hogg was one of the strongest supporters of the recently founded state University, being perhaps second only to Davie in his usefulness to its interests. A trustee from 1789 to 1802, he attended all meetings of that body, frequently visited the institution, was a member of the Trustee committee on appointments, and a member of the committee that selected a device for a seal. His son, John Hogg, was a partner with his father in business and a member from Orange in the lower branch of the state legislature in 1794 and 1796.

<sup>4</sup> Our treaty of alliance with France in 1778 provided that the French might bring their prizes into our ports and that enemies of France might not fit out privateers in the said ports. Genet, French republican minister in 1793, had interpreted this to imply that French prizes might not only be brought in, but sold also, and that France under the treaty possessed the right to fit out privateers in our harbors. Washington and his cabinet interpreted the treaty to mean that France might fit out such privateers, but not use our ports as a base for their operations against her enemy. Also the right to sell in our ports prizes taken at sea was denied. Hence the situation as complained of above: French privateers fitted out in our ports and then lay off the same ports for the capture of our vessels claimed to be carrying contraband.

<sup>5</sup> President John Adams, inaugurated March 4, 1794. Despite our strained relations with France he did not call the extra session of Congress suggested above.

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HALIFAX, May 8th, 1797.

DEAR UNCLE:

I have arrived safe at this place and find myself pretty well fixed for study, tho surrounded on all sides with a great variety of amusements, in every respect calculated to engage the attention of one in the vigor of youth. I spent a few evenings in forming an acquaintance in some of the neighbouring families, but generally was busily occupied with the affairs of court, as I enlisted at once into the drudgery of General Davie's office, at present I feel a little relieved for court rose on yesterday evening. Every one here is much agitated by the near approach of a cock-fight which begins on this afternoon. There have been several pack-fights but none so decisive as to enable us to guess what will be the fate of the general engagement.<sup>1</sup> The gentlemen in town fight against those of the country, otherwise it is the Longs against the Alstons. Tho know my purse is not much interested in the affair, yet as an inhabitant of the town I hope the event will be favorable to the town party. But Hodge without

doubt will announce to you in his journal the issue of so important a conflict.

The most renowned Dr. Perkins<sup>2</sup> left town yesterday. He has been operating for a week past upon the sick and the lame, the deaf and the dumb, and blind in this neighborhood. Some assert that all the miracles mentioned in the gospels have been wrought anew. Others are infidels. However, none complains of his charges for he labored without money and without price. I had not the pleasure of hearing much of the doctor's conversation and should I judge from his appearance, I would conclude, that if there be anything uncommon in his points, that the discovery was made like all other great discoveries—by accident. He is about fifty five or sixty years old, considerably above the common size, his eyebrows remarkably large and heavy, his nose, lips, and chin denote rather the fatness of his head than the sprightliness of his genius. He seems as if he had been more accustomed to sleeping and eating than studying or making discoveries, or as if he had oftener drunk from a tun of beer, than sipped from Helicon's fountain.

I am, dear sir, your friend and servant,

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Doctor Charles Harris,  
Cabarrus.

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<sup>1</sup> Evidently reference to local politics and local political leaders. There were numerous Longs and Alstons in the town and county of Halifax at this date. Halifax was one of the seven borough towns in the state with the right of separate representation in the lower house. Richard H. Long represented the town in 1792, 1798, 1799, and 1800. Willis Alston was one of the county representatives, either in the house or senate, from 1790 to 1795. Elected to Congress in 1799 he served until 1815, and again from 1825 to 1831. He was a Republican in politics and Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee during the war of 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Probably Dr. Elisha Perkins, of Connecticut, who in 1798 patented certain "magnetic tractors" for the cure of various human ills. These "tractors" were compass-like affairs, with one blunt pointed and one sharp-pointed arm, made of combinations of copper, zinc, and gold, or iron, silver, and platinum. Cures were effected by stroking, and their principle of action was supposed to be analogous to that of galvanism or animal magnetism. The "tractors" of Dr. Perkins had a remarkable vogue in England as well as in this country in the early 19th century.

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HALIFAX, July.

MY DEAR BROTHER,<sup>1</sup>

It is with pleasure that I learn from your letter the

progress you have made in the studies of college, as also in your private reading—the only thing you have to attend to, is that you read no more than you are able to digest properly. By now reflecting upon what you have read it will be easier to discover whether you read with due attention. Suppose I were to ask you from Anson's voyage<sup>2</sup> what was the object of his expedition? Why did he fail in a great measure? What part of his conduct shows most clearly his courage? his perseverance, or his humanity? What is the feudal system? How introduced into England? When was the present form of Government established? Whether was Charles I or his parliament most to blame in the civil wars? By making a few simple questions of this kind you will readily discover your strength.

I am not surprised that you should have the mumps, when they are so generally prevalent. As you had the small-pox when a child you need not fear them—a circumstance with which perhaps you are unacquainted.

You will in July probably have a short vacation and may be inclined to visit Hillsborough. I owe Mrs. Estis ten dollars for a bed which I have heretofore neglected to pay. You would oblige me by calling upon her and discharging the debt, also make an apology for the tardy payment. I will write to Mr. Richards<sup>3</sup> and request him to give you money for that purpose.

You are desirous that I would send a description of the spinning machine. This I could not do without making a rough plan upon paper, which will require some time. When I have time I shall take pleasure in satisfying your curiosity.

I have heard nothing of my horse. Please let me know how he comes on.<sup>4</sup> You can write by Dr. Hall<sup>5</sup> or others of this town who will be at your examination.

I am, dear sir, with affection,

Your brother,

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert Harris.  
University.



<sup>1</sup> Robert Wilson Harris, younger and only brother of Charles Wilson Harris, was born in 1779 at Ragton, his fathers' home upon the "Mill Grove Tract" in the Poplar Tent district, Cabarrus. He entered the University during its second session, which began in August, 1795. He seems to have remained a student there until sometime in November, 1797. From this date he remained with his father in Cabarrus until about February, 1799, at which time he undertook a mercantile career at Salisbury. In 1801 he set up a mercantile business at Sneedsboro, on the Pedee River, in Anson county, and here remained until his death in 1812.

<sup>2</sup> The book to which Harris here refers was published in London, 1784, by John and Paul Knapton, with the title page as follows: "A Voyage round the World in the Years 1740-1744, By George Anson, Esq., Commander in Chief of His Majesty's ships sent upon an expedition to the South Seas. Compiled from papers and other materials of the Right Honorable George Lord Anson, and published under his Direction. By Richard Walter." It was during the "War of Jenkins Ear," between England and Spain, 1739-42, that Anson, with six ships set out for the Pacific by way of Cape Horn. He plundered the Spanish ports and shipping up the whole west coast of South America, captured Spanish treasure to the amount of 500,000 pounds in gold, crossed to the Philippines, plundered these, and returned to England around Africa. His exploits during this memorable voyage recalled to the English navy the old glories of Drake and the other sea captains of the Elizabethan Era.

<sup>3</sup> William Augustus Richards, teacher in the Grammar School and tutor in the University in English, French, and sometimes German from 1796 to his death in 1798. Richards was an Englishman of varied attainments and experiences. He had seen service both in the English navy and the merchant marine. In America he had become a strolling player, his troupe becoming stranded at Warrenton, North Carolina, whereupon he secured employment as a teacher in the "Academy" of that place. He showed such proficiency in this role that, falling under the observation of certain members of the University's board of Trustees, he was procured for the work at the University as above stated. Here, in an exemplary manner, he justified the confidence of his sponsors and acquired that of everyone connected with the institution. During a part of his service Richards acted as Treasurer of the University, a chief duty of the office at this period being to serve as repository of the funds for students and to pay out the same upon order from parents and guardians.

<sup>4</sup> Horse probably left by Harris at Chapel Hill upon his retirement from service at the University. It was likely now at the use of his brother, or awaiting sale. The ownership of a horse for riding was at this date a necessity in North Carolina to every lawyer, preacher, practitioner, teacher, and all others whose interests required any degree of travel. Population was yet too sparse, and roads too undeveloped to justify stage-coach lines west of Warrenton. The luxurious traveler sometimes used a "chair," or two-wheeled, one-seated vehicle known to the present generation as the "sulky" or "dog-cart;" but the average traveler went on horse-back.

<sup>5</sup> Probably Reverend James Hall, D. D. (Princeton and the University of North Carolina), who as Synod Missionary of the Presbyterian Church in the Carolinas at this date, was an untiring traveler throughout North Carolina and adjoining states. Dr. Hall was born and reared in Iredell county (then a part of Rowan). He graduated at Princeton in 1774 and at once entered the ministry in his native region. At the outbreak of the Revolution in 1775 he became an ardent patriot and an inspiration to the cause of independence. In 1779 he became captain to a volunteer company of cavalry organized in his district and, a little later, chaplain of the regiment into which his company was integrated. In this double capacity of chaplain and captain he did yeoman service against Cornwallis' invasion, 1780-81. After the war he resumed his ministry with great vigor and effectiveness. Dr. Hall was greatly interested in the fortunes of the State University, frequently visited it, and was an early donor of books to its library. He died in 1826 at the ripe age of eighty-two years. For a full sketch of this remarkable man, see Foote's Sketches of North Carolina, Chapter 24.

HALIFAX, July 8, '97.

DEAR BROTHER:

Inclosed I send an unsealed letter to Mrs. Estis, hoping you will read and seal it before you deliver it to Mrs. Estis.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Richards will give you the money when you demand it. Please settle the account when you next go to Hillsborough.

I am your brother,

Mr. Robert Harris,  
University.

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

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<sup>1</sup>This business matter with Mrs. Estis, of Hillsboro, is explained in the previous letter above.

HALIFAX, Aug. 26th, 1797.

DEAR UNCLE,

I venture still upon a stay in this sickly country. So much is to be performed in the way of study before a man can enter (with any prospects of success), upon the practice of law,<sup>1</sup> that I am induced to prolong my opportunities of improvement at this place, and if one or two lawyers who now plead in the neighbouring counties should die or decline business, probably I might make my first attempts in Halifax district. I have some distant hope that Blake Baker<sup>2</sup> will be promoted to the bench by the next Assembly. I shall not fix myself before that period.

You perhaps have heard that Dr. Perkins, for his great skill in metallics, has been expelled from the Medical Society in Massachusetts, a doctor in New York not long since published a very rational piece on these extraordinary points. He admits that they indubitably have their effect in several instances but not to the extent which Dr. P. has alleged. He admits no operation of electricity or magnetism, as many scribblers on the subject have supposed, and accounts for their power by the tickling and pleasing titulation which their application to the skin may occasion, this being a sensation so opposite to a pain in the muscular parts, that the latter often is overcome and a spasm or constriction may be removed. Of course an ivory toothpick or a tickling straw may be as useful as Brass and Iron.

Inclosed I send a letter to Mr. Edwin Reese respecting a vacancy in the University which may be at his choice. I hope you will forward it by post if not better nor more ready conveyance offers. If I have mistaken his address be so kind as to correct it. My best respects to Aunt Sally. I hope you will long enjoy uninterrupted health and be the means of bestowing the same blessing on a great number of patients.

I am, sir, with respect yours,

CHAS. W. HARRIS.

Doctor Charles Harris.  
Cabarrus.

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<sup>1</sup> Harris was now reading law under the supervision of General Wm. R. Davie and at the same time assisting Davie in the office end of his work. He procured his license to practice in 1798, and in 1799 assumed the whole burden of Davie's practice when the latter became Commissioner to France.

<sup>2</sup> Blake Baker was a native of Warren County. He was Attorney-General of North Carolina from 1795 to 1802. In 1807 he represented Warren county in the state legislature. In 1808 he was appointed by Governor David Stone one of the judges of Superior Court. He was a violent Republican partizan from about 1799 to the date of his death, 1818.

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HALIFAX, Sept. 22, 1797.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

It is so long since I received a letter from you that I am entirely unacquainted with your progress in your studies. I hear a good report, in general, of the University, and I flatter myself that your industry and talents keep you from being ranked among the dullest of your fellow students. In the letter which I have received from you, there is a uniform silence respecting your plan for life. You are now seventeen years of age and must know that much depends upon your own exertions and your own plans; and whatever deference you may be disposed to pay to the advice of friends I can hardly be persuaded to believe that you will entirely submit to their direction and disposition, without so much as exercising your own choice. Whatever that choice may be, you ought to make it known, that your friends may assist you in bringing it into operation. In conversation you have informed me that you had a predilection for merchandise, it is probable that you still continue in the same mind. In con-

sequence of what you then said I have ever since been enquiring for an eligible situation, in that line, for a beginner. But previously having mentioned the subject to your father, he neither approving nor disapproving in direct terms, I took it for granted that he would find no difficulty in consenting to anything which would apparently promote your interest. Tho' my ignorance of the minutia of trade may render it impossible for me to particularize the qualifications necessary for one about to enter the business, yet I am certain that, industry and frugality, steady perseverance, honesty and punctuality are essential in a mercantile character and I hope that in these you would not be found deficient. A good and accurate knowledge of accounts and an *easy business hand* are not matters of small consequence. When I last had the pleasure of seeing you I particularly requested you to make all possible improvements in Book-keeping and writing. I hope you have not neglected them. Your last letters were written something better than usual, but there is great room for improvement.

I have now in view a merchant of my acquaintance to whom I have mentioned you, he carries on business very extensively and is still wishing to extend it farther. He owns several vessels, three of which are now at sea, one on a voyage to London, the others to West Indies. He may have use for such a person as you. I will know the particulars before my return, and if the prospect is good I shall make conditional proposals to him in your behalf. In the meantime, let me hear from you and also from home if you have received any late accounts. I have received but one letter from my father since I left the back country. I am with respect and affection, Dear Sir,

Your brother,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Present my respects to the Gentlemen of the University.

Mr. Robert Harris.  
University.

HALIFAX, Oct. 29th, 1797.

DEAR BROTHER,

I received your letter in answer to mine respecting your intention of entering into merchandise and am happy to find that you agree with me upon that subject. You mention a plan which you had formed of improving the farm on Rocky River. That would, at best, be confining your exertions to a very small sphere. Your father's farm which he has always designed for you, is very much cut down, and taking into calculation the mills and stills, cannot be very productive, besides it lies in a distant and retired part of the country where fortune would rarely throw bars of gold into your lap. She deals out her favors in busier and more crowded countries.

One of Mr. Drew's<sup>1</sup> Brigs has arrived from the West Indies. His ship the *Poll Carey* got safe to London, is now daily expected at Edenton, and must soon arrive, unless the savage Sans cullottes<sup>2</sup> be kind enough to pilot her into some of the Republican ports.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Drew is now in Halifax. I have spoken to him respecting you, and from your character he appears desirous of having you with him as soon as possible. Especially if the *Poll Carey* makes her port. The employment he will give you is of the most extensive kind. You would stay in a store in Halifax until the spring, when his vessels sail, he says you shall go Supercargo to Havana or to London or some other place in Europe. He expects that you will not refuse to attend to his business in any part of the world wherever his interest may lie, and it may at times be necessary for you to remain in London or elsewhere six months or more to transact his concerns. What he will allow you I have not, nor shall not enquire; industry, honesty and abilities will not go unrewarded. This much I have been able to do for you, it is but trifling; the burthen of any man's interest must rest upon himself. I hope you are employing every moment of leisure time in writing, accounts, etc. In pursuing this plan, as it requires that you should be at a distance from home, you must consider the feelings of your

father, who always has been particularly attached to you. His hearty consent you must endeavor to obtain. This is the more necessary because he has none of his children with him, is now less able to attend to the more active and laborious part of his business. I will be at the University by the 14th of Nov. when I shall converse with you further on the subject of this letter. In the meantime do as your friends would wish, and may you prosper.

I am, your brother, with affection,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert Harris.

University,

N. Carolina.

I have taken Superior court license and shall return to this place after Christmas. Perhaps you will come with me.

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<sup>1</sup> John and Williams Drew were merchants and traders at Halifax and Edenton, doing a general carrying trade and export business. In 1793-94 they gave, respectively, 64 and 10 dollars upon subscription to the University. Evidently, as suggested in a previous letter, Charles W. Harris had secured the offer of an apprenticeship for his brother, Robert, with the Drew mercantile interests.

<sup>2</sup> Breechless fellows, a name of reproach given by the aristocrats at the time of the French Revolution to one belonging to the extreme republican party, the members of which had rejected short breeches, an article of dress peculiar to the upper class, and had adopted pantaloons.

3. France in 1797 was openly preying upon our trade under color of contraband laws and English precedent, to which the infant United States had submitted. In reality France's Republican Government (The Directory at this time) was actuated by resentment at our interpretation of our treaty with France (made 1778), and by the profits accruing from plundering a nation clearly too weak to resist. Our Commissioners, Pinckney, Marshall, and Gerry were this very month (Oct., 1797) in Paris trying to open negotiations with the corrupt Directory to close up all causes of tension between France and America. Their efforts ended in the "X. Y. Z." incident, and a burst of indignation throughout America.

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HALIFAX, November 12th, 1797.

DEAR BROTHER,

The alteration which has taken place in my plans since I last wrote to you has made it necessary for me to defer my journey to the back [country] for ten days longer than I had at first intended. Court in Nash county begins on tomorrow, in Halifax next week. I must attend to them before I set

out. I hope you have provided a horse and everything necessary to go to Cabarrus<sup>1</sup> immediately after the examinations. Take care of the letter I last wrote to you respecting your prospects in the mercantile line, and show it to your father when you introduce a conversation with him on that subject, if you think proper to consult him before I arrive in Cabarrus, which will be about the 30th of November. Mr. Drew's ship *Poll Carey* has not yet come to port.

As I shall have a great number of books to bring from the back country<sup>2</sup> on my return to Halifax, I would be willing that such as are at the University should be conveyed by some of the young gentlemen of this place when they come home. I have written to Mr. Geo. Long requesting him to contrive the matter. I now scarcely recollect what books of mine are at Chapel Hill—Anson's *Voyage*, Tooke's *Pantheon*,<sup>3</sup> and my large *Atlas*, or book of *Maps* are among the number. Mr. Bingham<sup>4</sup> of Chatham borrowed my *Atlas* perhaps he has returned it before this time. If not, and Mr. Long<sup>5</sup> will be kind enough to undertake to convey it, I hope you will send to Mr. Bingham for it. My horse is on the spot and you could hire a boy for a dollar. It would be but the journey of a day. But whoever goes for it ought to be directed to secure it well against wearing and tearing; a wetting would ruin the book entirely—therefore that also should be guarded against.

Mr. Richards<sup>6</sup> owes me a balance of \$26.00, I requested him to pay the same to you. I beg, therefore, that you would be so kind as to receive it and pay it immediately to Mr. Holmes<sup>7</sup>—to whom I am indebted, but if Mr. Richards should not pay it or any circumstance turn up contrary to my expectations so that the money cannot be paid to Mr. Holmes, I hope you will mention it to him as I have informed him that you would pay the money. Pleasant Hall<sup>8</sup> is to ride my horse to Halifax. You will give any assistance in your power in fixing him up for his journey. Perhaps the horse may require new shoes or some repairing about his feet.



Please to have my bed clothes and other articles in my trunk well aired and and the whole secured in the possession of some careful person before you leave Chapel Hill. Write to me by the young Gentlemen who return to Halifax. Give my respects to Mr. Springs,<sup>9</sup> Frank Burton,<sup>10</sup> Houston,<sup>11</sup> and Mr. Osborne,<sup>12</sup> Dixon,<sup>13</sup> and others. I am, dear brother,

Yours affectionately,

Mr. Robert Harris.  
University.

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

<sup>1</sup> Ragton, the Harris home on Rocky River, was seven miles distant to the west of the present town of Concord, county-seat of Cabarrus. It was originally in Anson county; then in Mecklenburg, cut off from Anson in 1762. After 1792 it was in Cabarrus, cut off in that year from Mecklenburg.

<sup>2</sup> "The back country" was a common phrase in the South throughout colonial times and up to about 1820, being used alike in Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, to denote the less populous interior or Piedmont regions in contra-distinction to the seaboard area.

<sup>3</sup> "The Pantheon," representing the "Fabulous Histories of the Heathen Gods, and Most Illustrious Heroes, in a Plain and Familiar Method, by way of Dialogue," by Andrew Tooke, M. A. Tooke was born in London in 1673 and died in 1731. His book was an exceedingly popular work among eighteenth century scholars, the twenty-ninth edition of it being published in London in 1793.

<sup>4</sup> Evidently William Bingham the first (reverend), an honor graduate of Glasgow University, Scotland. He immigrated to America about 1788; for a short time he preached at Wilmington, North Carolina, and established a classical school there. In 1795 he removed his school to Pittsboro, in Chatham county. From 1801 to 1805 he was professor of Ancient Languages in the State University, resigning in the latter year to reopen his school at Pittsboro. In 1808 he removed his school to Hillsboro, and a little later to a plantation he had purchased near the present site of Mebane. The present Bingham School at Mebane is in direct descent from the first William Bingham's log school-house near that place.

<sup>5</sup> George Washington Long, of Halifax, entered the University in 1795 and graduated in 1799. He was one of the organizers of the Concord Society (later the Philanthropic Literary) in 1795 and is recorded as its first debater, the query being: "Which is best,—An Education or a Fortune," the supporters of education winning the decision.

<sup>6</sup> William Augustus Richards, tutor in the University. See above.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Holmes, professor of languages in the University from 1796 to 1798. Holmes was not in high favor with his colleagues at the University and seems to have been a disturbing element in the period of his service there. See Battle's History of the University, Vol. I, pp. 156, *et seq.*

<sup>8</sup> William Pleasart Hall, of Halifax, graduate of the University in 1803, and member of the House of Commons for the town of Halifax in 1808.

<sup>9</sup> Adam A. Springs, of Mecklenburg, one of the seven who made up the first graduating class of the University (1798).

<sup>10</sup> Francis Nash Williams Burton, of Granville, A. B. University of North Carolina, 1799.

<sup>11</sup> William Houston, of Iredell, A. B. University of North Carolina, 1798. Physician.

<sup>12</sup> Either Alexander Osborne, or Edwin J. Osborne, brothers, of Rowan, A. B. graduates of the University of North Carolina in 1798.

<sup>13</sup> The editor is unable to discover the identity of this person. He was not a member of any of the classes at the University of near date.

Nov. 27th, 1797.

DEAR BROTHER,

I am happy to understand that you were lucky enough to procure a horse for your journey home. I shall be with you at farthest, within ten days after you receive this letter. I need not inform you that the disappointment in not receiving my horse detained me longer than I expected. I now write to inform you that we have just heard that the Poll Carey has arrived at the bar and is probably before this time safely moored at Edenton. She made a very lucky voyage and among other things has brought in dry goods to the amount of 13,000 pounds sterling. Mr. Drew,<sup>1</sup> from what he has heard of your character, is very desirous of employing you in his service, and has lately urged me to use my interest in procuring your consent, and the consent of your father to engage in his business. He wants the assistance of some person immediately. He has had several applications but has agreed to engage with no one until he heard from you. I have always told you to consult with your father and procure his entire approbation was the first step. I make no doubt but you have disclosed the matter to him and heard his opinion. Give me leave to observe that I conceive it highly necessary that every young man should learn some business or some trade which would be attached to his person, and give him an intrinsical worth, independent of his circumstances as to property or family. But such an acquisition cannot be made without some inconvenience, without the sacrifice of a person's pleasures for a time. If you study physic you must serve an apprenticeship in beating at the mortar and rolling pills. If law, you must copy lengthy Bills, answers, etc. You must set Richard Roe and John Doe (poor innocent names) to eject, assault, batter and misuse each other and then bring them to justice against their wills. If merchandise, you must sweep up the storehouse, weigh sugar, measure salt, write a great deal and stand constantly behind the counter for a long time before you will be able to earn your bread. I mention not these difficulties to discourage. I hope

you have more firmness than to turn your back on trifling obstacles. Now, if your father consents, you ought, without delay, to procure some decent clothing, at least one suit, if you succeed, as I hope you would. It would be the last expense to your father. If you come at all, you should immediately. Determine soon; remember that what I have to communicate to you shall be suppressed until I see you in Cabarrus.

My best wishes,  
my dear brother  
shall always attend you.

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert Harris,  
Cabarrus.

Give my affection to my father and show him my letters to you on this subject. My love to my step-mother.<sup>2</sup>

Nov. 27th, 1797.

(Gen. Smith<sup>3</sup> will much oblige his humble servant Chas. Harris by giving this letter the first opportunity of a conveyance).

<sup>1</sup> Merchant of Halifax and Edenton, with whom Harris was endeavoring to place his brother Robert for an apprenticeship in business. See above.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Harris, the elder, married as his second wife the widow of General William Davidson, killed Feb. 1st, 1781, at the battle of Cowan's Ford in his efforts, with the badly organized state militia, to hamper Cornwallis' crossing the Catawba River.

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Smith, soldier, statesman, and philanthropist. One of the first trustees of the University of North Carolina. Donor in 1790 of 20,000 acres of Tennessee land to the institution about to be founded. He was for fifteen years a member of the state Legislature (senate) from Brunswick county. He was governor in 1810. Smith Hall, at the University, now used as the Law Building, was named in his honor. He died at Smithville, Columbus county, February 10th, 1829.

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HALIFAX, Nov. 7, 1798.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

If you are engaged in merchandise, you must certainly have a South-Sea-scheme in view,—if in Chemistry, you are pursuing the discovery of the Philosopher's stone, if in Astronomy, you are searching for Mercury's Moons, and if in Mechanics, then you must be beating your brain for the perpetual motion. If not engaged in the one or the other of the above mentioned pursuits, how comes it to pass, that

the weekly post bears on its wings not a single line from the airy hills of old Ragton, where you breathe such healthy lively air? Methinks your imagination would constantly teem with images and your brain be crowded with ideas. And if so, why not impart them to me? I only console myself in this way that in all events you will not permit yourself to be unemployed, and that when not engaged in writing to me that you are more usefully engaged in business of importance.

I observe in a passage in Cousin William's<sup>1</sup> last letter that you and he intend to give me a visit in January. I shall be happy at all times and places to see you. A complete suit of broadcloth at that season will be both fashionable and comfortable. If Oscar<sup>2</sup> has not been sent by Mr. Allison<sup>3</sup> to the Assembly, you probably design to bring him in January. In that case I would only observe that you must bring another to ride back and not depend upon my little bay as I have already sold him to be delivered when I receive Oscar.

I am very desirous to know how your intended storehouse progresses, and what plans you have lately formed for the purpose of replenishing it,—if you be at any loss about that matter only apply to Mr. Industry, he has been the great replenisher and furnisher of all shops in the world, and without doubt will give his assistance to you. It appears to me that tho flour is very low at this time, it must before long rise very considerably. The exportation of provision has of late been so difficult and our trade to the West Indies so much harassed<sup>4</sup> that nothing less could be expected but a cheapness of our provisional articles. A change in these particulars must soon take place.

If your cousin, Miss Reese,<sup>5</sup> still continues with her relations on Rocky River, pray present her my compliments in the most respectful terms. Let me hear how my sister<sup>6</sup> and her numerous family enjoy their health. As to her happiness she and I never could agree respecting its constituent parts. I only desire she may always find herself as happy as I ever wish her. I asked numerous questions in

my last letter,—the answers of some of them were important,—I might almost have consulted the Oracle of Delphi in the same time.

Yours Respectfully,

CHARLES WILSON HARRIS.

Mr. Robt. Harris,  
Cabarrus.  
(via)  
Charlotte

<sup>1</sup> Probably William Lee Davidson, step-brother to Charles and Robert Harris. His mother, the widow of General William Davidson, who was killed at Cowan's Ford in 1780, married the elder Robert Harris. His mother was Mary Brevard before her first marriage. William Lee Davidson was a state senator from Mecklenburg for a number of years after 1813; was a patron of education, and particularly of Davidson College, which bears his name.

<sup>2</sup> Name of a horse.

<sup>3</sup> John Allison, member of the Commons from Cabarrus in 1798, 1800, and from 1802 to 1805.

<sup>4</sup> Both French and English interference with neutral trade, as an incident of the great European struggle, was a most distressing feature of our political and economic life in the closing decade of the 18th and the opening decade of the 19th century. In the war of 1812 we finally turned upon England, one of our tormentors, though we had suffered scarcely less from France.

<sup>5</sup> Probably the daughter of Jane Harris and Reverend Thomas Reese, and sister of Edwin Reese.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Harris (the younger), wife of Nathaniel Alexander. This only sister of Charles and Robert Harris, bore her husband nine children.

HALIFAX, Jan'y 6, 1799.

DEAR BROTHER,

Your letter of Dec. 1st, came to hand, you there detail the difficulties which have prevented you from becoming a merchant. I wish it was in my power to remove them, there is no situation in this town or neighborhood that I could recommend, besides it would be highly imprudent for one who enjoys such a constitution as you do, to sport with it in this sickly climate. I already sensibly feel that I am on the misty melancholy and diseased banks of Roanoke!<sup>1</sup> Not on your pure, cheerful and healthy hills. Some opportunity no doubt will soon occur in your favor and afford ample employment to you without removing from home, in the meantime the Farm, Mills, etc., will not leave you entirely without some business.

If possible I shall remove to the University during the sickly months of next season, at any rate I will be there in July, at the commencement. Perhaps it may be convenient for you to meet me at that place, if so, let me hear from you.

Whether you have had an opportunity of conveying my horse to Chapel Hill, I have not yet heard.

Present my respects to my father and all my friends.

Yours,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert Wilson Harris,  
Cabarrus, (via Charlotte.)

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<sup>1</sup> Harris apparently was already beginning that decline in his health that was to end with his early death from tuberculosis, Jan. 15, 1804. Halifax, situated on the Roanoke River in the comparatively low, alluvial plain of our coast region, undoubtedly impressed Harris, an up-countryman, as unhealthy, as witness his frequent references thereto.

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HALIFAX, Feb. 78th, '99.

BROTHER: Your favour of the 4th inst., I have the pleasure of acknowledging, and am happy to hear that you are agreeably situated in Salisbury.<sup>1</sup> You need not be informed after the trial you have already made, that the business of the county requires the greatest attention and constant confinement. Your perseverance will certainly overcome every difficulty and discouragement. It is weakness in the extreme or great want of judgment to attempt an undertaking and afterwards relinquish it half finished. It is certain that little villages in our State are not very distinguished as schools of industry or virtue of any kind, but are rather remarkable for idleness in the youth that frequent their streets and public houses; you will, I hope, be little influenced by example of those of your own age.

My indisposition which began in last October has very much abated within a few weeks past, and yielded only to a regular course of the Rushonion, or Sangradian<sup>2</sup> practice of physic, after many ineffectual attempts to procure health by tonics, &c. In January I began to let blood once in every two days, and drink salts continually. This regimen, though

unlikely to produce the effect, pursued rigorously for ten or twelve days, restored me in some measure to my former complexion and strength.

When last in Salisbury I left in Evan Alexander's care,<sup>3</sup> among other books, Martin's Natural Philosophy, in three vol. octavos; they are books which were once possessed by an uncle<sup>4</sup> of ours, who died at Princeton, and were given to me as 'remembrances.' Please to call upon Mr. Alexander and take them into your care. Should I not call upon you for them, this letter will be a proof to others that I intended them as a present to you.

It is yet uncertain whether I will travel in the summer as far as Salisbury; there is but little doubt of my being at Chapel Hill in July, where I would be happy to meet with you if it would not interfere with your business.

Please to present my best respects to Mr. Torrence<sup>5</sup> and his lady. I am, dear sir,

Most respectfully,

Your brother,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Robert W. Harris.

<sup>1</sup> Early in 1799 Robert Wilson Harris, after a period of evident hesitation in the matter of a pursuit, went to Salisbury and engaged in a mercantile business. Whether he was in an independent venture or in the capacity of an employee there the author is unable to discover. He remained in Salisbury until sometime in 1802.

<sup>2</sup> The Rushonian or Sangradian practice of physic was the practice of copious blood-letting as a cure for numerous human ills. Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was its chief exponent of use in America during the latter decade of the 18th century. He played a leading part in the fight against the epidemic of yellow fever which visited Philadelphia in 1793, breaking down his own health by treating a hundred to a hundred and fifty patients a day. His method of treatment was to give doses of calomel and jalap, bleed freely, and drench the patient, within and without, with warm water. He aroused much criticism within and without the profession. Peter Porcupine (William Cobbett) in his gazette likened Rush to Dr. Sangrado, a blood-letting quack in Le Sage's *Gil Blas*. Rush brought suit against Cobbett for libel and secured a verdict for \$5,000 damages.

<sup>3</sup> Evan Alexander, of Salisbury, Rowan county, Trustee of the University 1799 to 1809, and representative in the Commons from the borough of Salisbury from 1798 to 1803.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Harris, full-brother to Dr. Charles Harris of "Favoni" and half-brother to Robert Harris, father of Charles Wilson Harris. Samuel Harris graduated at Princeton in 1787 and was tutor there in 1788 and in 1789 until his death in that year.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Torrence. This gentleman was of Irish birth, born 1752. He



settled in Rowan county sometime just before the Revolution, building a home on the heights overlooking the Yadkin River to the northeast of Salisbury, and facing the "Jersey Settlement" on the opposite side of the river. It was from this height that Cornwallis cannonaded General Nathaniel Greene across the river in the latter's memorable retreat through North Carolina in 1781. The Torrence home was a center of culture and refinement in the early days of the republic. Here a ball was tendered President Washington while on his southern tour in 1791. Mrs. Torrence's maiden name was Hackett, her sister, Abigail O'Neil Hackett, becoming the wife of Robert Harris (the younger) in 1801. Albert Torrence reared four sons, Hugh, Albert, James and Charles, and one daughter who married Wm. E. Powe, of Cheraw, S. C. The elder Torrence died in 1825 at the age of seventy-two. The Torrence home about this date came to be known as "The Heights of Gowerie."

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HALIFAX, June 4, 1799.

DEAR BROTHER:

My health has much improved since I did myself the pleasure of writing to you. Soon after my letter I submitted to another course of bleeding which had its effect. Still a little of the bile floats in my system but it leaves me strength and spirit enough to pursue my business.

I flatter myself that you continue to be much pleased with you shop engagements,—a forced employment can never thrive. On the first of July I visit the University.<sup>1</sup> Nothing could reconcile me to the disappointment which I would feel at not meeting with you there, but hearing that you were much better employed. At present I continue but one day at home.

Excuse the shortness of this, I am,

With respect and affection,

Your brother,

Robert W. Harris,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Salisbury,

N. Carolina.

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<sup>1</sup> The degree of Master of Arts, then an honorary degree, was conferred on Harris by the University at Commencement, July 5, 1799, his journey referred to above being made to Chapel Hill for the purpose of its reception.

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HALIFAX, Nov. 18th, 1799.

MY DEAR BROTHER:

Your letter due the first inst. has not yet arrived. I presume it has not been owing to any want of regularity in you,

but to the want of punctuality in the post riders. Pray how is your health? Is your father returned? What news from your sister and family? It is thro' you alone that I converse with all my friends in the back-country. They are silent, they forget me in a moment. Were I in a less contemplative, or reflecting mood, than I feel myself at present, there would be sufficient reason to induce me to consider of how little consequence the life of an individual is to his country, friends, or even relatives, who is a young man, without a character, just entering upon business, and single or a bachelor? If he goes, he is no more missed than a grain of sand from the seashore. Such I feel is my situation at present. Let me look forward, suppose success attends me in my profession, my demise would be a matter of joy not grief to a needy tribe of brother attorneys. Suppose I had an established character, and filled situations of eminence, envy would clap her wings with rapture to hear I was no more, and many a sprightly sparkling eye would be fixed upon the vacancy I had filled. If married, rich, of a comfortable age, and blessed (as the world is pleased to term it) with children, my condition would not be improved. My own family would smile in their hearts, when sable black covered their outsides, for now they become masters of themselves and property,—these are not wild speculations. They are the result of observations on real life. I always thought there was more ingenuity, than reality in Cicero's famous treatise on the pleasures of old age. One of the greatest pleasures I now enjoy is the perusal of a letter from you and the monthly expectation of another. Pray do not disappoint me.

You will conceive me Hypo.<sup>1</sup> from the above, but I still act the the farce of life with as comic a face as any of my neighbors, and as the situation of my health will permit, which is very far from being firm.

I go to court this moment to engage in the disputes of others, and scuffle for a /40. Perhaps you may think my mind

better prepared for (Melancholy) dissertation than for forensic jangling.

I recommend you to the favors of fortune  
with all the affection of a brother.

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury.

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<sup>1</sup> Hypochondriacal. This spirit of morbidity disclosed by the above letter seems to have mastered the writer from time to time and is doubtless explained by his declining health. The ever lengthening shadow of the dread disease, consumption, now in a few years was to end his life.

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HALIFAX, Jan. 20th, 1800.

DR. BROTHER,

The Bearer of this is Mr. Joseph Davie,<sup>1</sup> brother of Gen. Davie, I recommend him to your attention, should he call upon you. His stay here is short, and I have only time to express my good wishes for your welfare. Your double letter of the 14th Inst. arrived this morning with affidavits. A few days ago was seized at Edenton the schooner Sam. Tredwell, John Drew, owner, and libelled by the collector for trading to the French West Indies, contrary to a late act of Congress, prohibiting the intercourse,<sup>2</sup> &c. The Captain says he was carried in by force by a French privateer, and only released on conditions that he would dispose of his cargo there and load with the produce of the Island. However there is great reason to believe that there was some secret intelligence and perfect understanding between the captors & captured, and that the latter *consented* to be taken in to port by force. It may upon investigation turn out to be one of that species of smuggling complained of by our naval officers, some months past. I believe she is the first vessel that has been seized under the same circumstances. Enclosed I send two notes, one on Wm. Snow, the other on Mr. Winter, both of Rowan county. They are for sums under the jurisdiction of the court and must therefore be tried by Justices of the peace. The money is due to Gen. Davie. I must

request that you would oblige me by placing them in the hands of such constables as may collect the money if they will not pay on demand. If you give them to any constable or other person, take a receipt for them, get the money as soon as possible.

Inclosed is the rough scribble of a piece intended for Hodge's paper.<sup>3</sup> I altered my mind. If you think proper request Mr. Coupee<sup>4</sup> to print it and send me the paper containing it by post. It is intended to expose the fatal consequence of the much delayed prosecutions against a set of the most consummate villains. The attorney general is not perfectly excusable. Be secret in this paragraph.

I am, my dear brother,

Most affectionately,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury.

Pray present my respects to Mr. Torrence and family.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Davie must have been on a visit from England to his brother Wm. R. Davie. General Davie had no relatives resident in America besides an uncle, William Richardson, of South Carolina, by whom he was reared and for whom he was named.

<sup>2</sup> After the "X. Y. Z." incident with France in 1798 the Federal Administration, John Adams president, regarded war with that country as inevitable and began to prepare therefor. Congress swiftly rushed through several acts looking to that end. One of these created a navy department; another increased our very weak navy by a number of frigates to be immediately built; another forbade trade with the French West Indies; and still another ordered our navy to protect the residue of our trade to the West Indies and attack and capture French ships interfering therewith. Under this last policy a number of sea-fights occurred with French vessels, which added prestige to our infant navy. About 84 French vessels, mainly privateers, were taken by us before France was brought in 1800 to make a new treaty with the United States. Thereupon our naval-commercial war with France ceased until Napoleon laid new restrictions upon our trade during Jefferson's second term. At the date of this letter, Wm. R. Davie, whose practice at law Harris had now assumed, was in Paris with Elsworth and Vans Murray arranging the treaty that was soon to settle our differences with France temporarily.

<sup>3</sup> Abraham Hodge, a veteran printer and pioneer newspaper man in North Carolina, was born in the colony of New Nork, 1755, and died at Halifax, in the state of North Carolina, Aug. 3, 1805. Aided by the grant of the public printing he set up a press at New Bern in 1786 and published there "The State Gazette of North Carolina." In 1789 the business was removed to Edenton, the publishers now being Hodge and Wills. In 1793 Hodge began to publish in Halifax "The North Carolina State Journal." Continuing the Halifax paper, Hodge and his nephew, William Boylan, began in 1796 to publish in Fayetteville the "North Carolina Minerva and Fayetteville Advertiser." In 1799 they removed this paper to Raleigh where it continued as "The

North Carolina Minerva and Raleigh Advertiser." The legislative session of 1800 (Nov. 17-Dec. 20) deprived Hodge of the public printing, transferring it to Joseph Gales who had in the previous year set up *The Raleigh Register* as the organ of the Republican party which was now assuming definite control in the state. Hodge and his nephew, Boylan, were staunch Federalists. They and their friends accepted the loss of the public printing with ill grace. (See other letters below). The "piece" referred to by Harris was evidently first intended for publication in Hodge's paper at Raleigh.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Coupee. He established a print shop at Salisbury in 1798 and in connection therewith published "The North Carolina Mercury and Salisbury Advertiser."

<sup>5</sup> Blake Baker, of Warren county, was Attorney-General of North Carolina from 1795 to 1802. For further references to him see letters below.

HALIFAX, March 15th, 1800.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your favor written on your birthday I have the pleasure of acknowledging. The subject is important to you and cannot fail to be interesting to me. Such considerations and speculations as you have entered into are well suited to a Birth-day, and very different from the thoughtless, giddy mode now in use at this place, of spending such seasons. When you seriously ask my advice in a matter of such moment as the plan of life you ought to adopt, I wish that I possessed experience and wisdom, that I might answer you to some purpose. If I have discovered any truth from the few years that I have lived, and from the little observation I have made, it is, that happiness and success in life are not inseparably connected with any particular employment or pursuit. The Farmer, the Merchant, the Physician, the Mechanic with steadiness, attention and prudence enjoy each his share of this world's goods. The Farmer stands upon more stable foundation, the Merchant plays a game at which he must at times risk his all. In either line of life I flatter myself you would in some measure succeed. Rivalship of which you speak is nothing. It is to be expected, not feared in every situation & should only serve to heighten our exertions and strengthen our resolution. When you form your plans and have resolved, let nothing, nothing discourage you. As a farmer I doubt not but you would be respected in your neighborhood and being somewhat acquainted with transacting business you might successfully at times mix with it a

little traffic & speculation. The greatest fortunes are made in this country by farming and planting.

You have heard of Truxton's<sup>1</sup> desperate engagement with a supposed 54 French frigate. We are at present all in doubt and uncertainty respecting that business; from a suggestion that she was engaged with the United States frigate, the Constitution, Capt. Talbot,<sup>2</sup> of 44 Guns, it is said the latter has been spoken off the capes of Virginia, much damaged by a fight with a French frigate which she would have taken but a sail from Guadeloupe hove in sight,—these supposed fights happening nearly about the same time and place appear a little suspicious,—we hope the report is unfounded, and that a mistake so unfortunate and disgraceful to our Navy has not been made.<sup>3</sup> It may be a blast to keep alive the old misunderstanding<sup>4</sup> between the Captains of those two Frigates. Allen J. Green,<sup>5</sup> once a fellow-student at the University, has been appointed a midshipman, and has taken his place on board of the Chesapeake,<sup>6</sup> a vessel built in Norfolk and now nearly ready for sea.

You speak of my indisposition and the propriety of my removing from Halifax. It is possible I might recover my health by a removal and find business in my profession in other parts of the state, but I have not relinquished all hopes of a perfect recovery even here. I am now engaged in a practice about to become valuable, I have in a great measure overcome the embarrassments of a young practitioner, am employed in cases of great moment to my friends, their confidence in me has been personal. It would be a poor return for me to make them for their attention, either to withdraw myself from their suits or to place them in the hands of another Attorney, nor is it probable that my situation in these respects will alter. New actions are commencing by my advice. When one business dies, three or four others are born. On these accounts I can only leave my post under circumstances that would form in themselves a sufficient apology for me; my want of punctuality in writing you for some time past was owing to absence on my circuit. Let me hear

from you regularly and of your health. I am, my dear Brother, yours,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury, N. C.

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<sup>1</sup> Captain Thomas Truxton commanded the United States frigate "Constellation" in the attempt of our government, 1799-1800, to repel the effort of France and England to prey upon our commerce under the claim of enforcing their contraband laws. It was the 1st of February, 1800, that the drawn fight between the "Constellation" and the French ship "La Vengeance" had occurred near Guadaloupe in the West Indies. The "La Vengeance" was out-pointed in the action, despite her superiority in men and guns. Though she escaped and later crept into the Dutch port of Curacao, she was found to be all but disabled, with fifty of her men killed and one hundred and ten wounded. The American ship sustained a loss of only 39 killed and wounded. In February the previous year Truxton, commanding the "Constitution," had captured the French ship "L'Insurgente." These two successes had raised the credit of this commander to a great height in American public opinion. Congress presented him with a gold medal March 25, 1800.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Silas Talbot, a veteran seaman of the Revolution, and now in command of the "Constitution." His notable success in the naval war with France was his ruse in Port Platte, San Domingo, by which he captured the French privateer, "Sandwich."

<sup>3</sup> This rumor proved to be unfounded.

<sup>4</sup> The editor has been unable to discover the cause of the differences between Truxton and Talbot, though it must have been a subject of wide discussion at the time.

<sup>5</sup> Allen J. Green, of South Carolina, a matriculate of the University of North Carolina in 1795. He was one of the founders of "The Debating Society," which, within the same year split into two branches, the seceding members setting up the "Concord Society." This latter society renamed itself the following year (Aug. 29, 1796) the Philanthropic Society, and has so remained. Green remained with the parent society, which soon took the name "Dialectic." Green remained only one year at the University. He received the appointment of midshipman Jan. 6, 1800, and resigned Jan. 17, 1803.

<sup>6</sup> This was the unfortunate vessel that, under Commodore Barron in 1807, submitted to a search for deserting British seamen at the hands of the British ship "Leopard" and for which Barron was court-martialed and dismissed from the service. The same ship, in 1813, under command of Captain James Lawrence, was defeated off Boston harbor by the British ship "Shannon" and taken into Halifax harbor, Nova Scotia.

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HALIFAX, April 6th, 1800.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your letter by Mr. Hodge I received yesterday. It is true I have not had it in my power for some time past to write agreeably to our engagement, owing principally to my absence from this place. Miss Narcissa's<sup>1</sup> elopement I was sorry to hear of, and is the more distressing to the parents on account of the death of their favorite child. That family



about the time of my birth and before, enjoyed prospects equal to any other in the place. Their sons are———. <sup>2</sup> Their daughters no longer bear the name of the family. This is not mere accident but owing to some causes which are worthy of being enquired after and avoided. Of all the misfortunes that can happen a man, that is the greatest which arises from a father's disappointment in the prospects of his children———. You are to be a farmer, I presume. <sup>3</sup> Once I advised you to steer a distance from Love & matrimony. Your plans were then different from what they are at present. If you settle at Ragton, I will hope to hear, soon after, that you have joined yourself to an amiable——— who is as much the choice of your friends as of yourself (in serio).

You say nothing in your letters of your health, from this I am led to conclude that you have recovered from your emaciation and now weigh full 150 lbs. I have not been so particular as to balance myself for several months, but imagine I am nearly as when I last saw you. In subscribing for Peter Porcupine, *Rush Light*, <sup>4</sup> I have also directed him to send you one. Each number will cost you the postage only, to wit, six cents. After reading them you can oblige Dr. Harris <sup>5</sup> &c with a perusal. They may not be masterpieces but will serve to wash out the littlenesses of some great characters. His facts are generally true, I may say, always, but he often paints in high colours. His abuse, though great, stands upon a true foundation. I am happy to hear of the true federalism of your county. <sup>6</sup> Mr. Hodge <sup>7</sup> brings back a goodly report. I wish how long the back country may continue Industrious, Virtuous & Patriotic. Here <sup>8</sup> party influence or omnipotent brandy (both blind leaders) dictate everything.

I have in conjunction with a Mr. Brown, a fellow lawyer, purchased four or five lots in Halifax, in the upper part of it, and on an airy elevation and am now fixing up an office into which I shall remove before June. I hope for many advantages from this alteration. I now live so low in town that the sickly current of Roanoke continually rolls under my

very nose. I live often in fogs,—while mosquitoes and frogs sing and croak me to rest. Not a word from Gen. Davie.<sup>9</sup> His lady<sup>10</sup> is very uneasy, and fretted herself into a real indisposition.

My respects to Mr. Torrence's family. Accept of my thanks for Mr. McRea's eulogium.

I am, dear brother,  
most affectionately yours,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Hodge expects and begs that you send him a receipt from the clerk of Mecklenburg county for the Laws & Journals, as soon as you can receive the same.

Halifax, N. C.

April 7th.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury, N. C.

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<sup>1</sup> The identity of "Miss Narcissa" and her family the editor is unable to discover. The family was one probably resident in Salisbury and with which the Harris brothers both were acquainted.

<sup>2</sup> The failure of the writer to complete the sentence relative to the "sons" seems from the context to indicate "unworthiness" on their part.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Harris had evidently informed his brother of a contemplated change in his occupation, probably indicating his purpose to return to their father's home to engage in agriculture and trade. The editor thinks it probable that he did reside with his father between the early winter of 1800 and the summer of 1802. At the latter date he established himself as merchant at Sneedshoro, in Anson county. *See letters below.*

<sup>4</sup> Rushlight (a rush candle, or its light; hence, a small feeble light). William Cobbett, English journalist, was born at Fordham, in Surry, England, 1762. Coming to America by way of France in 1792, he set up a print-shop in Philadelphia, then the seat of the American government, and under the pen name of Peter Porcupine lashed French republicanism and American democracy with a scorn "as coarse and personal as it was always bitter." Cobbett reached his public mainly through pamphlets until 1797, when he established, March 4, "Porcupine's Gazette" as a daily, and in 1798 a tri-weekly mail edition of the same paper, without the advertisements, and called the "Country Porcupine." As a champion of Federalism and scourge of Republicanism Cobbett's productions were universally popular among the Federalists. In 1799 his paper was removed from Philadelphia on account of the yellow fever epidemic and continued as a weekly until early 1800 at Bustleton, Pennsylvania. About this date Dr. Benjamin Rush secured the \$5000 verdict against him for libel (see an earlier note). Seriously crippled financially, Cobbett now launched the "Rushlight" to continue his attack upon Rush and other of his enemies, being careful however, to keep within the law. The "Rushlight" was in the form of a pamphlet and seven numbers in all were issued. Nos. 1 to 6 were published February 15, 28, March 15, 31, April 30, and August 30, 1800. Vol. 2, No. 1 (undated) has title: "The Republican Rushlight by William Cobbett." No. 6 was published in London. No place of publication is given for Vol. 2, No. 1. The other numbers were published in New York. Cobbett left America in the fall of 1800. In January, 1802, he began to publish in London his "Weekly Political Register" which he con-

tinued without intermission until his death in 1835. This new publication was at first stoutly Tory in politics, but later became an uncompromising champion of Radicalism.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Charles Harris, of Cabarrus, uncle of the Harris brothers.

<sup>6</sup> This was "presidential year," and there has been no period in our national history that presents an aspect of stronger partizanship in politics. Federalists and Republicans throughout the nation confronted each other in a spirit of utter distrust and rancor. Jefferson, the "hope" of the Republicans, achieved the presidency over John Adams and the latter retired from office in 1801 with utter bad grace and amid the gloomiest forebodings of his party-men as to the future of the country in the hands of the radicals. The western and southwestern counties in North Carolina remained staunchly Federalist during these stormy years, in general returning Federalist representatives to Congress from 1799 to 1803, a number of districts continuing to do so as late as 1813.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham Hodge, the editor. See *supra*.

<sup>8</sup> Halifax and the congressional district centering therein was strongly Republican. Willis Alston, a "rabid radical" in the eyes of the Federalists, represented the district continuously from 1799 to 1813.

<sup>9</sup> General William R. Davie, in conjunction with Oliver Ellsworth and William Vans Murray, had been appointed as commissioner to France in 1799 by President Adams in an endeavor to heal our differences with that country. Davie had resigned the governorship of the state to accept the mission. A treaty was signed with Napoleon on the 30th of September, 1800. Davie returned to America in December, reaching his home in Halifax on the 26th of that month.

<sup>10</sup> Mrs. William R. Davie was Sarah Jones, sister of General Allen Jones and Willie Jones of Halifax. The latter was the adroit political leader of the forces in the state which had successfully opposed the ratification of the Federal Constitution by the state in 1788, deferring the action of the state for more than a year. After North Carolina did enter the Union Jones withdrew from political life.

Second Sunday in May 1800.

HALIFAX.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I am just freed from the fatigues of a tedious and busy court. Judge Haywood<sup>1</sup> presided,—it was his object to disburthen the docket of a number of old disputed cases, which have been expecting slow-footed justice for more than ten years. Our jail has not been more crowded with villains than at the commencement of the last term. Two persons were committed for horse stealing, three for stealing negroes, two for the murder of negroes, one for perjury, one for passing counterfeit money, and two witnesses for the State,—of suspicious characters who could not give security for their appearance at court. Of these, three were sentenced to death. One to the pillory, others fined or acquitted. This is a melancholy catalogue<sup>2</sup> to the man who has been calculating upon the progressive improvement of our country in civilization and morality and is enough to produce despair

when added to the Blacklists that are kept at Raleigh. I am well persuaded that it is in your part of the State if anywhere, that we can discover anything like general morality. There religion is not considered a disgrace and its teachers are<sup>3</sup> still reputable.

Elections<sup>4</sup> now begin to be the general subject of conversations. Parties in this district become more and more defined. It is not the personal good qualities of a candidate that are inquired for; whether he is a Federalist or not, is all the question. T. Blount<sup>5</sup> will poll against Alston<sup>6</sup> for Congress. Judge Haywood against Gideon Alston<sup>7</sup> for elector. This last is the most important. The re-election of Adams to the Presidency is very doubtful. Should Jefferson be successful we may expect that those complaints and discontents which prevailed in the State of Pennsylvania on the election of McKean<sup>8</sup> to the government will extend over all the Union. We must expect that those who now hold posts of Honor, trust, or profit, under the United States, however worthy for abilities or integrity will be displaced purely because they are federal and their places filled with such as accord with the Chief Magistrate in their political principles.<sup>9</sup>

Judge McCay<sup>10</sup> is said to be the candidate for elector in the Salisbury division. Pray let me know what prospect there is of his succeeding and who opposes him.

Please present my best respects to your father, sister, &c. when next you see them, or write to them. It will be impossible for me, I fear, to see you this summer. My old, faithful horse, for some time past has been a little lame and I could not safely trust (him) in so long a Journey.

My respects to Mr. Torrence and family. Tell Mr. E. Osborne<sup>11</sup> that I am happy to hear that he is about to *buckle to* with so amiable a lady as Miss S———S———.

Your Brother,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,

Salisbury.

Halifax, N. C.

May 12th, 1800.

<sup>1</sup> John Haywood, of Halifax, was Attorney-General of North Carolina from 1791 to 1794. In 1794 he was elected by the Assembly as a judge of the Superior Court and served on the bench until 1800, at which time he resigned, and accepted a retainer of \$1,000 to defend James Glasgow against the charge of issuing fraudulent land warrants while Secretary of State (1777-1798). By this action, and his course during the trial, Haywood incurred a considerable degree of odium in the state. As a result he emigrated to Tennessee where he became a member of the Supreme Court, which office he held until his death in 1826. While a citizen of North Carolina he had published "A Treatise on the Duty and Office of Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, etc.," and "A Manual of the Laws of North Carolina." In Tennessee he published "The Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee."

<sup>2</sup> This gloomy picture of court congestion and the multiplicity and character of the crimes before the County Courts in the year 1800 tends somewhat to soften the view, now so generally and justly prevalent, that our judicial system is inadequate and too slow-moving. The contrast is in favor of the present; but few would contend that our present system is a remarkable product for a hundred and more years of growth.

<sup>3</sup> Harris' appreciation of the fact that the West, or "back country" was at this date maintaining Federalist leaders in office, while the East generally was in control of the Democracy.

<sup>4</sup> Elections for the Seventh Congress and for president of the United States.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Blount, representative from North Carolina in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Congresses (1793-1799) and again in the 9th, 10th and 12th Congresses, dying in office in 1812. He was a resident of Tarboro in Edgecombe. He was sixth in a family of ten, the offspring of Jacob Blount, of Craven. Three others of the brothers attained distinction in public life. These were William, Willie, and John Gray Blount. (For the family genealogy see Wheeler's Reminiscences, page 130, *et seq.*)

<sup>6</sup> Willis Alston, of Halifax. Member of Congress from 1799 to 1815 and again from 1825 to 1831. He was a strong republican partizan and much hated by his opponents. During the War of 1812 he was Chairman of House Ways and Means Committee.

<sup>7</sup> Gideon Alston was a brother of Willis Alston and likewise an ardent Republican. He was in the state senate in 1805 and 1806. In 1807 he was elected a Councillor of State by the Assembly and to the same office in each successive year until 1831, one year excepted, 1815.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas McKean, member from Pennsylvania to the Stamp Act Congress, 1765, delegates from Delaware to the First Continental Congress, 1774, and to the Second Continental Congress, 1775, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence and of the Articles of Confederation, author of the Constitution of Delaware. He was the only man who served continuously through all the sessions of the two Continental Congresses. In 1799 he was elected in opposition to the Federalists as governor of Pennsylvania where the transition to Republican control was accompanied by loud mutterings of discontent on the part of the Federalist party. Nevertheless he was chosen for three successive terms, retiring from the office in 1808.

<sup>9</sup> Forebodings as to what Jefferson would do with the appointing power, should he be elected president, was general among the Federalists throughout the country. Upon election, however, his use of the appointing power was much milder than his opponents had anticipated, though they refused to admit this. He made no clean sweep of the Federalist incumbents but attempted a policy of equalization by degrees, removing a few Federalist office-holders directly, replacing others with Republicans as terms expired by limitation, and still others whom death removed from office. In other words, the first Republican president of the United States was not a "spoilsman."

<sup>10</sup> Spruce McCay, of Rowan, member of the Superior Court bench from 1782 to 1808, the date of his death. He was one of the most useful citizens of the state during the years of his service. He married Fannie Henderson, daughter of Judge Richard Henderson, founder of the Transylvania Company which made the pioneer effort, on an extended scale, in the settlement of Kentucky and Tennessee. Contrary to Harris' supposition, it does not seem

likely that Judge McCay was a candidate for Congress from the Salisbury district in 1800. In that year Archibald Henderson, McCay's brother-in-law, was the Federalist candidate for the district, to succeed himself, and was successfully elected.

<sup>11</sup> Edwin Jay Osborne, of Rowan, a member of the first graduating class at the University of North Carolina (1798). He became a useful lawyer, practicing first at Wilmington and later removing to Salisbury. He was the father of Judge James W. Osborne, who was born in 1811, graduated at the State University in 1830, and became one of the most brilliant lawyers the state has ever produced. He was a judge of the Superior Court from 1859 to his death in 1865, and was the father of the well-known former District Attorney of New York of the same name and now living in that city. Harris' reference above to Edwin Jay Osborne's marriage (buckle to?) with a Miss S\_\_\_\_\_ S\_\_\_\_\_ must have been based on mere rumor, which proved inaccurate. Osborne married a Miss Harriet Walker, of Wilmington.

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HALIFAX, June 20, 1800.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your letter of the first Ins. I received, and am sorry that my business and absence prevent me from being as punctual in my correspondence as you are. The fatigue of myself and horse, with the circuit, which I have just finished, the length of the journey and that of the season have conspired to determine me to forego the pleasure of seeing my relations this Summer. The extent of my excursion will be to Shockoe Springs<sup>1</sup> in Warren County. My inclinations still are set upon a voyage to sea, but the short intervals in my business present an insuperable Barrier to the execution of such a scheme.<sup>2</sup>

I continue repairing the pleasant lots which I informed you Mr. Brown & myself had purchased; the house is almost ready for my reception. I have laid out about one hundred dollars besides the purchase, and to make it convenient, some hundreds more would be necessary. Boarding is here so extravagant that I look forward to such arrangements as will enable me to furnish breakfast and supper within myself.

Our general attention as to public affairs is set upon the election of president and vice-president. The issue depends upon our state.<sup>3</sup> As far as I can procure information, the following is a statement of probabilities:

		FEDERAL	ANTIFEDERAL	PROBABILITIES
Edenton	District	Mr. Harvey	Col. Hamilton	} antified.
Bertie	"	Wm. McKenzie	Col. Winn	
Halifax	"	Mr. Haywood	Gid. Alston	
Washington	"	Col. Mayo	Mr. Ed. Hall	} federal
Granville	"	L. Henderson	Col. Taylor	
Hillsboro	"	W. Alves	Col. Tatom	doubtful
Fayette	"	Martin	_____	} federal
Newbern	"	Mr. Jones	_____	
Salisbury	"	Judge MacCoy	_____	
Wilmington	"	_____	_____	doubtful
Morgan	"	_____	_____	antified.
Surry &c.	"	_____	_____	antified.

Almost every person has his own opinion respecting these elections. Pray let me know what is the general opinion respecting them in your county.

Should it prove true that Buonaparte has lately been mortally wounded<sup>5</sup> our negotiations must be retarded and our expectations of celebrating the fourth of July with Gen. Davie be entirely disappointed.<sup>6</sup> It is now known that the Portsmouth—Capt. Neal, sailed for the purpose of bringing back our Envoys—she has been gone nearly three months.

From Raleigh we hear that Glasgow<sup>7</sup> and Willoughby Williams<sup>8</sup> have been found guilty, that the Grand Jury has found a bill against Thomas Blount.<sup>9</sup> It has been whispered that the indictments against these men are deficient and not supportable, if so, we shall hear that Judgment has been accepted. This would completely settle the business with our State officers, particularly with Mr. Baker.<sup>10</sup>

I am, your brother,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury,  
N. Carolina.

Mail           Halifax, N. C.  
June 21st.



<sup>1</sup>Shockoe Springs, in Warren County, was in colonial days and the early period of the republic a well-known and favorite health resort. The waters were regarded as having excellent medicinal qualities and attracted health-seekers from afar.

<sup>2</sup>Harris made this voyage to sea before his death and failed to find the relief he anticipated. See below.

<sup>3</sup>In the electoral vote of 1800 Adams received 65 and Jefferson and Burr 73 each, the election in consequence being thrown into the House for a decision between Jefferson and Burr, and with the well known result. North Carolina had twelve electoral votes at this date, the electors being chosen by districts. Of these Adams secured four and Jefferson eight. Hence Harris' estimate of the probable Federalist strength exceeded it by one vote. In 1796 Adams had carried only one district in the state.

<sup>4</sup>Harris' list of the electoral candidates is incomplete, and the editor is unable to complete it with the material accessible.

<sup>5</sup>One of the many false rumors that frequently reached America of Napoleon's assassination.

<sup>6</sup>General Davie did not arrive in America until the first week in December, 1800, landing in Norfolk. Hope in the favorable character of the treaty he carried immediately boosted the price of export commodities. (See *Raleigh Register*, Dec. 16, 1800).

<sup>7</sup>James Glasgow, secretary of state in North Carolina from 1777 to 1798, was brought to trial the 10th of June, 1800, before a special court composed, by an act of the Assembly for the especial purpose, of the judges of the four superior court districts into which the state was then divided. Judge John Haywood resigned before the court convened and became the chief advocate of the defense. The remaining three judges, Samuel Johnston, John Louis Taylor, and John Hall constituted the court. The charges against Glasgow embraced particular the fraudulent issue of land warrants by which he had materially profited. He was convicted, the court rendering its decision on the 17th June, the penalty being a fine of 2000 pounds and commitment to jail until the fine was paid.

<sup>8</sup>Willoughby Williams, of Greene County, Deputy Secretary of State, was indicted and tried with Glasgow for collusion and also convicted, his penalty being 500 pounds and jail until paid.

<sup>9</sup>The Blount brothers, Thomas and John Gray, were also indicted before the special court, charged with procurement of land warrants by fraud through James Armstrong, entry-taker of claims for western lands. The frauds charged were of date 1789, the lands concerned being now (1800) in the state of Tennessee. Both were ultimately acquitted. John Gray Blount was in early manhood a companion of Daniel Boone in trans-mountain exploration and had thus become interested in the western country. A resident of Beaufort, he was reputed at the date of the trial to be the largest landholder in the state, much of it, however, being property in the new state to the west. It was the western land interests of the Blount family that carried two other of the Blount brothers, William and Willie, to the trans-mountain frontier. In 1790 William Blount was appointed by Washington as governor of the Territory south of the Ohio, just ceded by Virginia and North Carolina to the Federal Government. The northern portion became the state of Kentucky in 1792. Blount was president of the Convention which made the Constitution under which Tennessee became a state in 1796. In the same year he was chosen United States senator from Tennessee and in 1797 was expelled from the senate for inciting the Creek and Cherokee Indians to attacks upon Spanish territory. Willie Blount was secretary to his brother while territorial governor, and himself governor of Tennessee from 1809 to 1815.

<sup>10</sup>Blake Baker, the Attorney-General, was suspected by the public of lacking zeal in his efforts to uncover the land frauds. So general became this opinion that he published a defense of himself. See *Raleigh Register*, Sept. 9, 1800.

WARREN COUNTY, SHOCKOE SPRINGS,  
July 11th, 1800.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have been at this place five days drinking the mineral, and feel no effects from it. I had greater expectations from the change of air and exercise than from any virtue in the water. I have fixed myself with accommodations a mile and a half from the springs, walk to it every morning before Breakfast, and ride to it at noon and night. This spring, like all others of the kind has profound wonders,—at one time or another every disorder in its turn has been removed by its power, if we are to credit *common report*. It rises within about eight feet from the bed of Shockoe Creek, is nearly as low as the creek water and springs from a bed of mud, which in wet seasons is trodden up by the cows (who are very fond of the water) and rendered inaccessible except by walking upon poles laid down for the purpose. The mud is black, and yellow sediment appears in every part of the spring or its branch. There is no inclosure around it. No baths. No accommodations to be had at the spot. The water is a strong diuretic and from its taste I imagine it is principally nitrous. It is eight miles from Warrenton, 40 from Halifax and near 50 from Raleigh.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth of July has everywhere been celebrated with great attention. The toasts drunk upon that occasion will be a kind of key to the political sentiments of the most reputable class of citizens. Federalism and its opponent become daily more distinctly divided by districts, counties, towns, or neighborhoods, but this division will be only formidable when States become the limits of political opinions, then nothing less than a dissolution of our Union will be the consequence, and on this principle we seem now nearly ripe for a division.<sup>2</sup>

The death of Jefferson has been reported. It first came from Baltimore, the Jacobins<sup>3</sup> believe it not. I mentioned it to Citizen Macon<sup>4</sup> on my arrival at Warrenton. He had not heard it before, turned off, supposed I was sporting with him, and would have no further conversation on the subject.

It would entirely disconcert the wondrous and deep laid plans of those disorganizers.

I am closely engaged in learning the French language under the Marquis de Clugny,<sup>5</sup> and hope to be able to converse in it before Christmas. Give my respects to Mr. Torrence and family.

I am, with affection,

Your brother,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury, N. C.

Warrenton, N. C.  
July 22nd, 1800.

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<sup>1</sup> See note on Shockoe Springs appended to an earlier letter in the series.

<sup>2</sup> As the presidential election of 1800 approached, party spirit ran so high that many public men seriously anticipated a dissolution of the Union. Partizan rancor was particularly stirred to white heat by the Alien and Sedition Acts and the trials that took place under the latter. Jefferson's followers believed these acts a clear invasion by Congress of the sphere of personal rights under state control. Centralization of all powers in the hands of the Federal government seemed to the Republicans the Federalists' program. The Virginia-Kentucky Resolutions voiced their protests and excitement continued to grow until Jefferson was actually in office. It was a critical year in American history, for the followers of Jefferson were doubtless inclined to go to extreme lengths to wrest control from the Federalist party.

<sup>3</sup> The followers of Jefferson were generally called "Jacobins" by their opponents during the last decade of the century. The purpose was to identify Republican principles with those of the extreme radicals, members of the Jacobin Clubs, in the "Terror" period of the French Revolution.

<sup>4</sup> Nathaniel Macon, of Warren County, representative in Congress from North Carolina from 1791 to 1817, speaker of the House from 1801 to 1807, and United States senator from 1817 to 1827. He was a stout supporter of the principals of Republicanism. Harris' reference to him as "citizen" Macon is ironical, citizen being the usual Federalist appellation given to the leaders of the democracy in America to emphasize their identity in principles with the extremists in France under whose influence titles of nobility had been abolished in the revolution and "citizen" decreed the only allowable prefix.

<sup>5</sup> A French nobleman resident in Warrenton, a refugee of the Revolution.

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WARRENTON,  
July 29th, 1800.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your letters of the first and 15th inst. arrived at this place a few days ago being forwarded by the P. M. of Halifax, and thank you for the information they contain. I hope

there is but little doubt respecting the selection of Mr. Henderson.<sup>1</sup> However firm your district may be, Jacobin principles seem to increase in strength here. In this division for Elector I believe the anti-federal candidate will receive a majority of votes in every county. Mr. Haywood, late judge, as affairs have turned, was the most improper person in the district to be proposed for that office. He is wavering and undetermined, and his conduct of late has not only ruined his own popularity but injured the cause which we expected he would promote. The resignation of his judgeship at a time the public had the greatest demand for his services, and when his place could not be filled by an appointment, is considered by every person in the same unfavorable light, and leads to a conclusion that avarice is his *primum mobile*. So far has it operated against him that in the county of Franklin where he resides, and for which he offers as a representative in the next General Assembly, he will not receive more than fifty votes.<sup>2</sup>

In your letters I hear nothing from Ragton nor from your neighbors. Is your father &c well? for he rarely sends me a letter. I received accounts a few days past from your sister.<sup>3</sup> She always writes to inform me of something disastrous, the death of her mother-in-law, and of others, her neighbors were announced in her last.

Tomorrow I leave this Republican county and will spend some days in Franklin and Nash on my return to Halifax; my court soon begins. I must be in readiness and have adopted your plan of writing some days before my promised time, when I suspect any business or absence might otherwise prevent it.

I am, Dr. Brother,

Yours affectionately,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury, N. C.

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<sup>1</sup> Archibald Henderson, of Salisbury, a Federalist aspirant as representative in the 6th Congress. to be elected in November. Henderson was successful, and also again in 1802.

<sup>2</sup> See a former note on Haywood's resignation from the bench. He was defeated in 1800 both as candidate for presidential elector and for the Assembly.

<sup>3</sup> The only sister of Charles Wilson Harris and Robert Wilson Harris was named Jane, born in 1770, and died in 1842. She married Nathaniel Alexander, son of Abram Alexander, chairman of the "Mecklenburg Declaration" Convention.

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HALIFAX,

Aug. 3rd, 1800.

DEAR BROTHER,

I have arrived at Halifax sooner than was expected when I last wrote to you. A few fevers and agues have made their appearance here during my absence. As for myself I feel a little improved by my journey and hope to weather out the storm.

Letters from Gen. Davie arrived here by the two last posts, but contained nothing except of a private nature. They are dated as far back as the 19th of April. The Portsmouth, —Capt. Neal—was then waiting to bring the commissioners home. The General expected to celebrate the 4th of July in America. In this expectation he has been disappointed. The different accounts which we have seen in the papers respecting any final adjustment of our differences with France, or of a failure of the mission must be entirely fabricated. And little credit can be attached to any accounts of their proceedings until officially published.<sup>1</sup> In my absence the Rushlight<sup>2</sup> came to hand. Mr. Hodge who knew of my intention of sending you one set, was good enough to forward them postpaid. I hope you have received them. If your friends on Rocky River have not seen them, you can send them down. They will serve to pass off a dull moment.

Thomas Blount has been acquitted and his brother J. G. Blount, as they say *Honorably*. T. B.<sup>3</sup> has made an offer of his services as a representative to Congress. I cannot pretend to say whether or not he will be elected.

Let me hear from you as soon as your elections are decided. I am,

Your Brother,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury, N. C.

<sup>1</sup> See note in an earlier letter.

<sup>2</sup> Porcupine's pamphlet gazette. See note in an earlier letter.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Blount. He was defeated for this, the 6th Congress. See note to an earlier letter for his congressional services.

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HALIFAX, Aug. 29th, 1800.

DEAR BROTHER,

Your letter containing the details of the election in your district I this day received,—the substance I have given to Mr. Hodge. I did not write agreeably to your request, because I found that all information which my letter could contain would be included in Mr. H.'s Journal.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Blount<sup>2</sup> lost his election by a great majority, but who are we represented by? Why, a trifling, Jesuitical pretender to politics, who if he dare to speak as he thinks would be found very discordant in sentiment from a great, and the most respectable part of his constituents. All that can be said in his favour is comprised in saying that he is preferable to Blount. That Great Demagogue is worn down. I attended Tarboro court last week. I did not meet with him in any company during the whole term. No dinings nor drinkings at his house, none of his prattle in the streets or public houses. The hand bills which he has industriously posted along every road, seem to pronounce to all that he is at least of a suspicious character. They have wrought conviction in no person's mind, but have raised doubts in many.

Mr. Hodge's last papers contain some accounts of the speeches of a great<sup>3</sup> Lawyer. Were you acquainted with Blake Baker, it would be unnecessary to inform you that he is orator and politician alluded to. He has lately commenced a most violent demonstration and always was a fool. He has been open and scurrilous in his abuse of Mr. Hodge, & a few more in this neighborhood. And that provoked what you now see in print; he will be a candidate for Senator at next assembly, and (also?) Judge Taylor.<sup>4</sup>

Letters arrived here this evening from Gen. Davie, dated May 18th. The negotiation had been retarded by the indisposition of Joseph Buonaparte, the head of the French Com-

missioners and Tallien, one of the ministers. At the date of the letters they had recovered and their business was progressing slowly. However, we have good reason to believe that the negotiation was suspended in June. The intelligence comes by a late arrival from St. Sebastian.<sup>5</sup>

Great exertions are making by Mr. Baker, Blount, Macon, and a few others to have Gales<sup>6</sup> elected public printer in the place of our friend Mr. Hodge. This *gentleman Gales* is said to be by birth an Irishman, but it is certain that he lately conducted a weekly publication in Sheffield in England and came to America because he did not behave peaceably at home. It is certain that he was invited from Philadelphia to Raleigh by party men for party purposes. A letter of John G. Blount to Gen. Willis<sup>7</sup> of Lumberton is a sufficient proof of this,—this letter, owing to its reference to some land speculation on which (torn) has been brought in our Sup. Court was delivered in Mr. Brown's hands, where it now is. It opens to Gen. Willis the whole plan and congratulates him on the prospect, and refers to some consoling letters from his brother Tom. Pray listen & let me know what the members from your country think on the subject of State printer and inform me.

I am, dear sir,

Yours,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury,  
N. Carolina.

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<sup>1</sup> Either Hodge's "North Carolina Journal," at Halifax, or his "North Carolina Minerva and Raleigh Advertiser," at Raleigh. See an earlier note for Hodge's career as publisher.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Blount, candidate for Congress. See note to previous letter. Willis Alston, Republican, as was Blount, won an easy victory. Harris' distaste for Blount was probably more than political. He doubtless believed him guilty in the land fraud charges. Nevertheless the context seems to prove Blount an adroit politician and master of the weapons in use during the early ante-prohibition era. This may have accounted for his political recrudescence in 1805.

<sup>3</sup> Spoken in irony of Attorney-General Blake Baker, whom Harris seems to dislike equally with Blount.

<sup>4</sup> John Louis Taylor, of Cumberland, judge of Superior Court. David Stone, of Bertie, was the successful candidate before this assembly (Nov. 17-



Dec. 20, 1800) for the United States senate. He succeeded Timothy Bloodworth, and had Jesse Franklin, of Surry, as colleague. Both were Republicans.

<sup>5</sup> St. Sebastian, a Spanish port on the Northern, or Biscay, coast.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Gales, of Sheffield, England. Gales edited the *Sheffield Register* until 1796. Pitt's Treasonable Practices Bill and Seditious Meetings Bill of 1795 tended to curb the rights of the press in voicing the discontent of the English masses who were suffering from the burdens of the government's war against the French Revolution. Gales in consequence came to America and set up his paper at Philadelphia in 1796. Nathaniel Macon in 1799 induced him to come to Raleigh where he set up the *Raleigh Register* which at once became the organ of the Republican party in the state. The aggressiveness and the ability of the editor soon made his paper the leading journal in the state and greatly strengthened the dominance of the party whose cause he backed. Macon and other Republican leaders, in order to insure the permanence and strength of the paper, saw to it in the fall of 1800 that Gales was chosen by the Assembly, now Republican, as public printer over the Federalist Hodge, who had had the public printing since 1786. The Federalists fiercely resented and resisted this "abuse of patronage" by the Assembly but were impotent to prevent Hodge's deposition.

<sup>7</sup> Probably Colonel John Willis, of Lumberton, Robeson County, a Revolutionary patriot and commander of militia in the operations of General Greene against Cornwallis in 1780-81. He was frequently the representative of Robeson in the Assembly, in both houses, between 1787 and 1800.

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HALIFAX, Sept. 18, 1800.

DR. BROTHER,

Your letter of Aug. 26th I received last night, on my return from Martin Court. You complain that I do not write regularly to you, yet I cannot recollect that I have neglected to write you a letter at the time appointed for some months past and then my failure was owing to absence. You request to know the author of the *Law character's* speech, at New Bern. It is principally Mr. Shepperd<sup>1</sup> who is the Federal candidate in that District for Elector, tho' several other persons had their share in it. Citizen Hodge could not help adding a little, as far as relates to the subject of British Debts. The "Affair at Brantley" and "Anticipation," which were in the succeeding journal are to be ascribed to Mr. Hodge. The "proclamation" in this day's paper is Mr. Brown's, and "the further particulars of the late Battle at Raleigh" is mine; thus you have a general account of authorship<sup>2</sup> which you will use, I am certain with prudence. Mr. Baker was on a visit to Prince Edward in Virginia to see his wife's relations, and went at least thirty miles out of his way to receive a beating at Raleigh. I expected that the colouring in Boylan's letter was high, but on comparing it with the representation of

indifferent persons it appears altogether moderate, certain it is the attorney betrayed a most dastardly soul to receive four or five blows on his back without facing the danger. Mr. Sessums, his own champion, says he shed tears in the street before he got clear of the field of battle. Mr. Schenck, his friend from Tarboro says the Attorney was so dismayed at the first blow that he did not once raise his loaded whip. All condemn. Boylan is a very young man, about my height, but heavier and is much less than B. Baker. He is nephew to friend Hodge. I hope your part of the State will do everything possible to secure Mr. Hodge's election as State printer. The Jacobins have two great objects in view at the next general Assembly, one to elect B. Baker Senator of the U. States. He is a kind of Martyr to their cause. The other is to give the patronage of the state to a printer of violent anti-federal principles. As to the first, it is to be hoped that Blake's own stupidity, folly and cowardice will prevent their wishes. Never did a man lay himself open to so much merited censure as he has done by his late conduct. It ought to be published every where, and spoken of by every tongue. It only requires to be known and understood to be detested.

Our republican neighbours, the Virginians, have lately almost experienced the same blessed effects of their outrageous democratic whims.<sup>3</sup> The negroes in Richmond and its neighbourhood had combined to make a general slaughter of all the white males and elderly women. The younger were to be preserved for their wives, they had a bold adventurer at their head who was to assume the name of Buonaparte. They had prepared a vast number of pikes and fabricated arms of different kinds out of scythes, sickles, etc., which were concealed in their cabins, had provided funds, from which they in several instances gave as much as four dollars bounty to (torn) or enlist a fellow in their service. The plot was discovered only three days before it was to have been put into execution. The whole city was in arms, a great many apprehended. Several have already been executed. Buonaparte by the last accounts had not been taken, but had fled to

the woods in a complete suit of regimentals. Tho' nothing of this has transpired in the papers, it comes in a way that cannot be doubted.

I am, dear brother,

Most affectionately yours,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury, N. Carolina.

<sup>1</sup> Probably William Shepard, Esq. of New Bern, father of William Biddle Shepard, member of Congress 1829-1837, and of Charles Shepard, member of Congress 1837-1841.

<sup>2</sup> The titles so liberally interspersed in the above letter seem to refer to articles by the several gentlemen named, which doubtless appears in Hodge's Raleigh paper, The North Carolina Minerva and Raleigh Advertiser. The editor hasn't access to the paper of the dates upon which they probably appeared. Most or all of them were doubtless of a controversial character and Harris' contribution; "The further particulars of the late battle at Raleigh," must have been an account, colored in the interest of the Federalist, of an encounter between Blake Baker, the Attorney-General, and William Boylan, nephew of Hodge and co-editor of the *Minerva*. From the context it seems that the trouble grew out of the struggle over the question of the public printing, which the *Minerva* had and was about to lose to Gales of the opposite party and editor of the *Raleigh Register*. Boylan was a very partisan and aggressive Federalist and moreover had a financial interest at stake.

<sup>3</sup> Harris attributes every ill that affects the country to the rising tide of democracy. The reference here is to a slave rising in and around Richmond, planned by a slave named Gabriel Prosser, self-styled "Bonaparte." It was to have taken place September 1st, 1800. The rendezvous of the negro troops was to be a brook about six miles from Richmond. The force was to comprise eleven hundred slaves, divided into three divisions, and marching upon Richmond from as many sides, was to deliver a surprise night attack. The arsenal was to be the common objective point of the three divisions. Success here was to be followed by a call to arms of their fellow-slaves and friends of humanity throughout the continent. This well-conceived plot proved abortive. Gabriel was hunted down and captured in hiding on board the schooner, *Mary*, four miles down the James, September 23, 1800. His execution followed shortly.

HALIFAX, Oct. 5, 1800.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have lately received several letters from you, the last dated Sept. 23rd. I feel myself much obliged to you for your attention. You have not for some time given me an account of your health.—Whether you yet weigh your 190 pounds,—as for myself I still linger in my dull way sometimes recovering—sometimes complaining. I have for three or four nights past been troubled by what I may call an ague

and fever, but it has no very uncomfortable attendants, except that it possesses me with an invincible aversion to sleep. Besides my professional engagements,—I am employed in repairing the lots and grounds which Mr. Brown and myself purchased sometime past, and in forming plans to accomodate myself on better terms in future, am sowing wheat and clover for pasture, building a kitchen, and so expect within a very few weeks, to have a boy and a negro woman on our lots. This will reduce the pain of our washing &c and the expense of horsefeed. It is right, and the only way to make life comfortable, always to be engaged in some plans. A few days ago I made a visit to Colonel Haynes,<sup>1</sup> an acquaintance of mine in Northampton, and uncle to Mrs. McCoy; he is now some years older than any of his family for some generations past have been known to be; he is of a weakly constitution, and has been lately reduced almost to a shadow by an indisposition which has lasted some months; he never had a child. After dinner he nearly exhausted himself walking through and explaining a large elegant building which he now has upon the stocks, this room he intended to make more elegant than any in the county, that would be a fine, cool summer retreat, a third would be an excellent dining room; here he intended to plant a tree to shade a window, there to set out an arbour,—in short he planned and explained everything as if he had the most perfect assurance of living there for three score years to come, or felt the blood of youth warm and active in his veins. Poor man! I am certain, that instead of living to occupy his palace, the first mansion he will remove to, will be his coffin, instead of enjoying the shade of his trees and arbours. He will never live to see them put forth their first leaves. Yet I do not blame him, life by such castle-building is dragged on with some comfort, when it might otherwise be entirely insupportable.

Last evening letters were received here from General Davie dated as far back as June 14th. As usual they contain nothing that respects the mission of the envoy, but it is ob-

served in one, that he expects to arrive in America, nearly as soon as the letter. It has had a long passage, perhaps the conjectures printed in Hodge's paper of tomorrow are not altogether unfounded, that the tardiness of the negotiation proceed from some view which the French government has to the ensuing election of President.<sup>2</sup> Our friend Hodge is not yet returned from New York. I expect he will be here within three weeks. I received \$10 by Colonel Ashe<sup>3</sup> for General Davie.

I am, dear brother,  
Most affectionately yours,  
CHARLES W. HARRIS.

My respects to Mr. Torrence and family.

Halifax, N. C.

Oct. 6th, 1800.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Salisbury, N. Carolina.

<sup>1</sup> Probably Eaton Haynes of Northampton County, member of the 4th Carolina Provincial Congress, which met at Halifax the 4th of April, 1776.

<sup>2</sup> The Federalists generally suspected the French government (now the Consulate) to be wilfully laggard in its negotiations with our Commissioners with the view of influencing favorably the Republican party's fortunes in the November election for president. This no doubt did enter into the consideration of First Consul Bonaparte to some extent.

<sup>3</sup> John Baptista Ashe (b. 1758, d. 1802), son of Governor Samuel Ashe (governor from 1795 to 1798, 3 terms). John B. Ashe was a resident of Halifax and had been a distinguished Revolutionary patriot and soldier. He had fought at Alamance in the Regulator War of 1771; he was a lieutenant-colonel under General Greene at the battle of Eutaw in 1781; he was a member of the Continental Congress in 1787-88; a member of the 1st and 2nd Congresses under the present constitution, and elected governor of the state in 1802 but died before he assumed office.

HALIFAX, Dec. 5th, 1802.<sup>1</sup>

DEAR BROTHER,

I received not long since your letter informing me that you had become postmaster.<sup>2</sup> I shall duly attend to its contents as often as I am at home. It gives me great pleasure and no small degree of pride to hear that my nephew Charles<sup>3</sup> continues in good health and grows apace. I am confident that

the prudence of my sister and yourself will give his infancy and youth such treatment as will harden both his body and mind for the rough vicissitudes of manhood. No greater curses in this life await a man than a feeble mind or puny constitution. I hope your dispute with your father will soon terminate; I cannot, tho' disposed to judge most favorably, think you are altogether free from blame in the business. Otherwise the affair would have been settled long ago. When with you I observed with no inconsiderable pain, that you had not made the conciliatory graces (if I may so call them) either your study or practice. The good will of every man is worth something and it is often to be acquired by the most trifling attentions than by a more solid purchase.

Let me hear of your family frequently, how the town progresses, if business increases, be assured that everything connected in any measure with your interest cannot fail to be most acceptable information to me. Present my best respects to my sister Abby.<sup>4</sup>

I am,

Brother,

Most affectionately yours,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris, Merchant,  
Sneedsboro, N. Carolina.

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<sup>1</sup> It is unfortunate that the two-year hiatus in Charles Harris' letters to his brother cannot be filled at present, though they may yet appear from some unknown source. It would have been particularly interesting to have had his comment upon the election of Jefferson and the general eclipse of the Federalist cause in 1801.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Wilson Harris was now post-master and merchant at Sneedsboro, a new town situated on the Yadkin, or Peedee River, in Anson county, near the South Carolina line. The town is now defunct, but it had early hopes and prospects of a vigorous life. As late as 1818 a stock company was formed to boom the place, with the expectation of developing navigation on the Peedee above and below, thus securing the trade of a large territory northward in the Yadkin Valley. Also it expected to draw trade from the eastward toward Fayetteville, which was then a trade center on the Cape Fear, and from the westward toward Charlotte. Archibald D. Murphy, the "father" of internal improvements in North Carolina was a shareholder in the enterprise to boom Sneedsboro and its chief promoter, it being a "side enterprise" of the Yadkin Navigation Company, which was organized in July, 1818, with Murphy as president. In 1819 Murphy confidently expected Sneedsboro to be the great inland town of the state. These bright hopes were doomed to disappointment. Soon after Murphy's death in 1832 the "town" disappeared from the map.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Wilson Harris, born to Robert Wilson Harris and his wife, Abigail Hackett Harris, April, 1802. The young Harris here introduced was the eldest child of Robert Harris and later became a most useful citizen of the state. At early manhood he entered Princeton and remained some years, then studied medicine and becoming a physician settled for practice at his grandfather's old place at "Mill Grove," on Rocky River in Cabarrus. In 1828 he married Mary Barringer, sister of General Rufus Barringer, of Judge Victor Barringer of the Foreign Court, at Cairo, Egypt, and of Daniel Moreau Barringer, representative in Congress, 1843-1849, Minister of the United States to Spain under the Taylor-Fillmore Administration, and Delegate to the Peace Congress of 1861 on the eve of the Civil War. From the union of Charles Wilson Harris and Mary Barringer sprang a family of twelve children, the fifth of whom was Harriett Hackett Harris, who married Captain A. J. Seagle and died in Chapel Hill, December 1914, at the home of her daughter, Mrs. A. C. McIntosh.

<sup>4</sup> Abigail O'Neil Hackett, wife of Robert W. Harris.

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HALIFAX, May 22nd, 1803.

DR. BROTHER,

I set off in a few days for Norfolk, & shall endeavor to find my way to Bermuda or the Bahamas.<sup>1</sup> In a second will I have left you my Executor & so arranged the business that you can complete it at one journey. My will is in Mr. Brown's possession. He has promised to have it proved. Should I rest my bones in the delightful climate I steer for, you can come down at a succeeding court and settle all.

I carry between \$700 & 800 with me.

I have empowered Mr. Brown to receive the following sums for me:—

In Northampton	£ 25
In Martin	£ 6
Court of Equity	£ 50
From Const. (able) Alsbrooke	£ 13
In Halifax	£ 22
In Halifax Sup.	£ 57
From Const. (able) Horton	£ 50
I left bond with (———?)	£119
Accts. worth	£92 19s 6d

And Mr. Brown owes me by promissory note 264£ 10s, amounting to 699£ 9s 6d. I have stated this for your satisfaction; some small loss is to be expected in several of the items. Besides on my books, horse, chair, harness and bed.



The little negro girl,<sup>2</sup> I could not provide for her in my absence and sold her to the owner of her father.

I have been entirely incapable of attending to electioneering subjects, but I may safely pronounce that if Alston and Jacocks (republicans) both stand a poll,<sup>3</sup> Gen. Davie will be elected.

Present my best respects to Abby.

I am, Your brother,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,

(P. Master)

Sneedsboro, N. Carolina.

<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Harris sailed from Norfolk on the 3rd of July for the Bahamas, where he trusted the climate would favorably affect his now rapidly declining health. Unconsciously this letter carries much of pathos, since it presents a brave spirit, well aware of his meagre chances for life, setting his affairs in order for the end. His sojourn at Nassau, in the Bahamas proved disappointing in its effects upon his malady (tuberculosis) and he returned to North Carolina in the latter part of the year, going to his brother's home at Sneedsboro, where he died, January 15th. 1804, in the thirty-third year of his age.

<sup>2</sup> This little girl was evidently a slave purchased by Harris to look after his comfort in the bachelor's home he had established in a house built by him in 1800 upon a part of the property owned at that time with Mr. Brown, his friend and fellow-attorney in Halifax. Presumably he had now sold his share in this real estate to Brown, this accounting for the promissory note for 264 pounds and 10 shillings referred to above.

<sup>3</sup> In the Congressional election of August, 1803, (8th Congress) Willis Alston, representative of the Halifax District since 1799, had a rival aspirant in his own party that threatened to divide the party strength and give the district to the Federalists. The danger of Republican defeat was the greater in that General Wm. R. Davie, the strong man of his party in the state, was the Federalist contestant for the seat. His friends generally expected Davie's great popularity and the Republican division to be decisive in their candidate's favor. However, their hopes were destined to disappointment. Nathaniel Macon, state Republican leader, and speaker of the National House of Representatives since 1801, interested himself in the situation (See Dodd, Life of Nathaniel Macon, 181). Jacocks was influenced to withdraw, thus giving Alston a clear field against Davie with the result that the latter was beaten. He now retired from public life and two years later gave up his practice of law for quiet repose upon his South Carolina estate, Tivoli, near Lancaster.

BAHAMAS,

NEW PROVIDENCE. NASSAU,<sup>1</sup> July 17, 1803.

DEAR BROTHER,

I arrived here safely on the 14th inst. with the short passage of eleven days, without meeting any Frenchmen.<sup>2</sup>

I have not been here long enough to shake off the effects of my voyage, or to form any conjecture respecting the operation of the climate on my constitution. I feel the heat excessive, no rain, everything parched up.

The news of war<sup>3</sup> has been here about eight days. I am told it has produced a great alteration for the better. It has given life to business; before the schooner in which I came anchored, we had a press gang aboard<sup>4</sup> which took all the white sailors except one.

I wish I could enclose some of the fruits which abound here. Present me to sister Abby and Charles.

Yours,

CHARLES W. HARRIS.

Mr. Robert W. Harris,  
Post-Master.  
Sneedsborough,  
N. Carolina.  
U. States.

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<sup>1</sup> See note 1 to preceding letter.

<sup>2</sup> See note 4 below.

<sup>3</sup> The Treaty of Amiens, March 25, 1802, had brought the first lull in hostilities between England and France since 1793. And this peace was only temporary. May 18, 1803, England declared war anew upon France and did not again sheath her sword until Napoleon's first abdication, April 11, 1814.

<sup>4</sup> Presumably Harris sailed from Norfolk for Nassau upon an English ship, hence the reference to the impressment of the crew of his vessel as well as the inferential fear of meeting a French vessel. Nevertheless, England did not now long content herself with impressment of the soldiers of her own merchant marine into service, but began that course with English subjects found in merchant service under the flag of the United States, thus making up one of the issues which led to the War of 1812.

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I arrived here<sup>1</sup> on Sunday last after a tolerable agreeable journey of two weeks. I am well pleased with the rout and shall always prefer it. I wrote from Fayetteville inclosing one thousand dollars with directions to whom to pay it, which I hope you received. I have not sold a bale of cotton nor is there a prospect of doing it very soon. I shall probably purchase very few goods. It will not however occasion any disappointment in the payment of the money I owe. I expect in a few days to receive a letter from you to hear from my

dear family. Kiss our dear little children, tell them I love them as much as if I saw them every day and that I will bring them pretty little books and good shoes. I am my dear Abby with the most sincere love your affectionate

Husband

ROBT. W. HARRIS.

Mrs. Robt. W. Harris,  
Sneedsboro, N. C.  
Anson County.

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<sup>1</sup> This letter was furnished to the collection by Mrs. A. C. McIntosh, of Chapel Hill, a great-grand-daughter of the writer, Robert Wilson Harris. It was written from Philadelphia and, though without date, must be placed between 1802, when he became a resident at Sneedsboro, and the date of his death there in 1812, probably nearer the latter.











